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CONTENTS

12 **PICTORIAL**
AMY SHARP

44 **ON THE COVER**
HEIDI RUNEBERG

66 **PICTORIAL**
KLAUDIA MÉNESI

84 **PICTORIAL**
SHANNON UEBERFLUSS

ISSUE
No 36 | **May 2025**

06 **ORAL FOREPLAY**
Four more sultry sex words, one for each week!

10 **PLAYBACK**
Archive snapshots of two world-famous celebrities!

20 **DORIAN ELECTRA**
Boundary-breaking, the singer writes their own rules

24 **CREATING WONDER**
Inside NYC's Swoon art scene

32 **BACK TO KALI**
Popstar Kali Uchis gets personal on her soulful sophomore album

40 **CULT FOLLOWING**
Valley of the Dolls a rally call for queer communities

54 **ALL ABOUT THAT CANNABIS OIL**
A skeptic's guide to everything CBD

58 **HIGH FASHION**
Cannabis the blazing new trend in the style industry

62 **ENCHANTING CHASITY SAMONE**
Exploring her DIY makeup and wellness insights

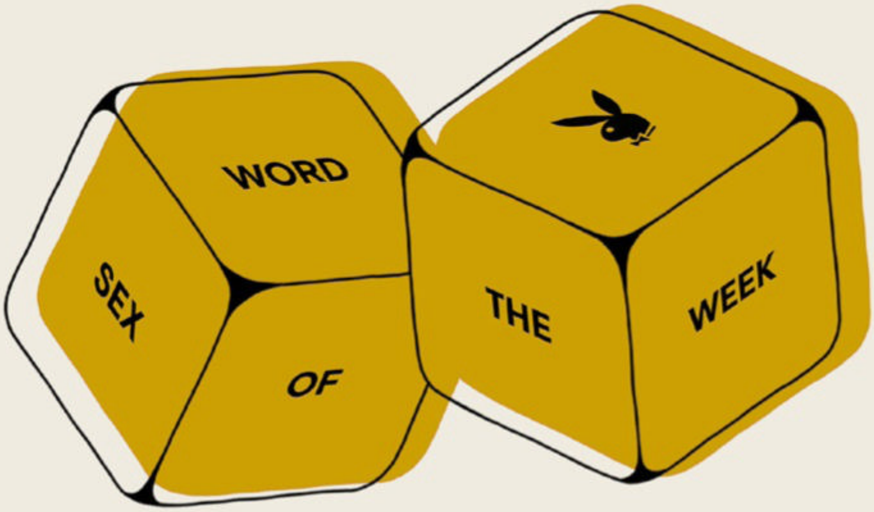
74 **SEX DOLLS STEAL IDENTITIES**
How companies create sex doll look-alikes of Instagram influencers

80 **A TASTE OF GEENA ROCERA**
Enjoy, as she shares a special recipe you've got to try

92 **20Q: PATRICK STEWART**
The preeminent actor talks Star Trek while hanging out with rescue dogs

42

PLAYBOY



Spinner

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

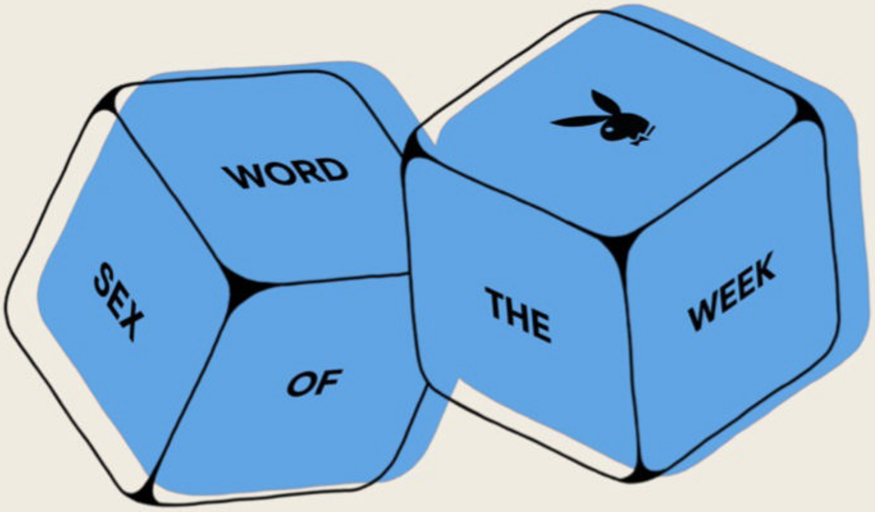
spinner (*n*) in the adult-film industry, a petite woman of exceptional agility

As one of the most beloved spinners in porn, Holly Hendrix was world famous for her gymnast build and dazzling on-screen flexibility.

The lexicon of porn spans a vast laundry list of terms, from *analingus* to *webcam* (remarkably, not even Pornhub offers searches for the letters *x, y* or *z*). The comparatively obscure *spinner* refers to women performers who are petite and flexible—traits typically associated with sexual agility. There's no official rule, but to be regarded as a spinner one would typically stand under five-foot-three and weigh in at less than 100 pounds. Picture an Olympic-grade gymnast on a balance beam. That's how spinners are seen in porn: fun-size, graceful and very lithe.

The term has expanded beyond the porn industry and can be used to describe any sexual partner who's small in stature and athletic in her bedroom pursuits. Of course spinner can bring forth the image of a person so miniature they could sit and spin on an erect penis—but please don't actually try this. Serious penile injury could ensue.

The adult world wouldn't be the same without them (nor would the bedrooms of countless lucky couples), so cheers to our masters of spin.



Metamour

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

This week's word is *metamour.*

metamour (*n*) within a polyamorous relationship, one partner's partner with whom one is not romantically involved

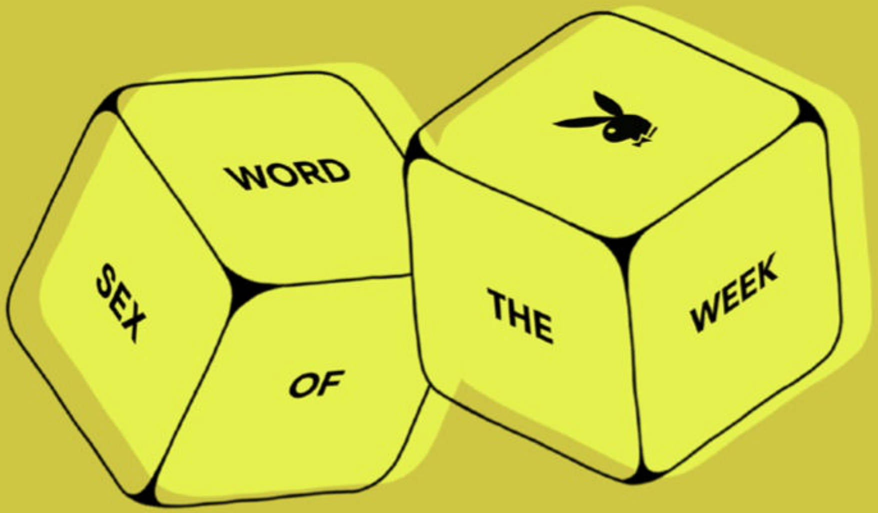
Brendan saw Nick from across the grocery-store aisle and gave him a quick wave, all the while wondering when Nick's next date with Brendan's wife would be; he was forever curious about his metamours.

This week's word comes from the vast terrain of polyamory. To put it simply, a metamour is a partner of your partner with whom you have no romantic relationship. If Brendan and Kara are together, and Kara and Nick are together, but Brendan and Nick are not, then Nick and Brendan are metamours. In a way, this structure stands in contrast to polyfidelity, a form of polyamory in which all members of a group date one another. (If such a group consists of three people, it is known by the relatively familiar term throuple.)

There are countless ways to engage in polyamory; its success depends on communication and boundary-setting, as it does in monogamous relationships. Those who practice polyamory have a range of options when it comes to interacting with metamours. You can get formally introduced, or you and your partner can take a DADT (don't ask, don't tell) approach where no information about metamours is exchanged. Some metamours opt to form fulfilling friendships with one another, building a poly family from their network of metamours.

For those seeking compersion, which is pleasure from witnessing another's pleasure, having a bond with a metamour can be an advantage. Acting in a compersive way could mean watching the kids for a weekend so your partner and metamour can enjoy a romantic getaway or making dinner reservations for the both of them at their favorite restaurant. In other words, it's the opposite of jealousy.

In the end, being able to navigate metamours comes down to the ability to be honest, open and respectful with your partners. It's not for everyone, but when done well, it can lead to heightened relationship satisfaction. Now that's *mour* like it.



Lactophilia

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

lactophilia (*n*) sexual arousal caused by lactating breasts and/or breastfeeding

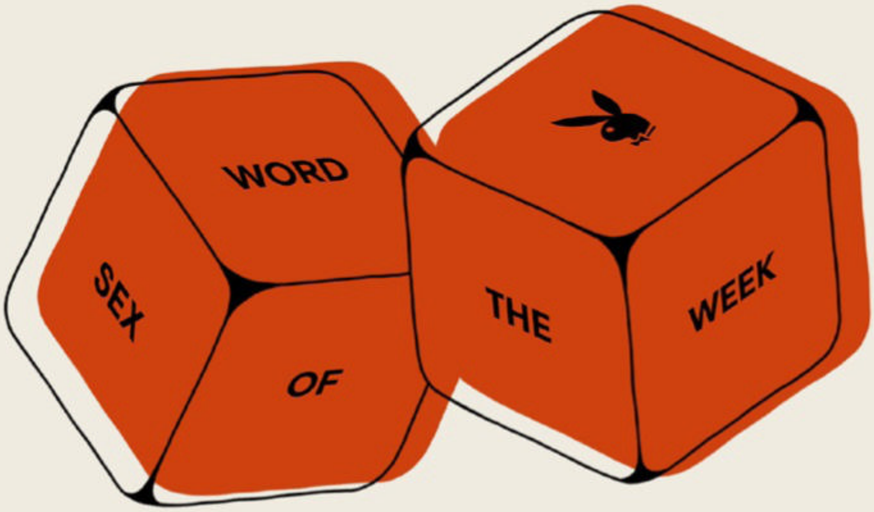
Anna was pumping lunch for her newborn, and the sight aroused her husband so much they ended up having vigorous sex while he sucked both of her breasts dry.

In celebration of Mother's Day on Sunday, this week's word is a nod to the tireless and often thankless work many mothers do in feeding their infants—and the community that's unapologetically turned on by it.

Lactophilia, also known as milk fetishism and erotic lactation, is the basis of ANRs (adult nursing relationships), which consist of a lactating woman and an adult partner who is typically—but not always—male. ANRs by nature have to be consistent and long-term: An interruption in nursing could cause the woman to cease producing milk. Breastfeeding can be sexually gratifying for both partners as it's not unheard of for a woman to climax while suckling. This fetish can sometimes accompany but should not be conflated with infantilism (sexual arousal from playing an adult baby) or maieusiophilia (a fetish for pregnant women).

According to a study from sexologist Justin Lehmiller that was previously published on Playboy, a third of 40,000 men surveyed had indulged in erotic fantasies about breast milk at least once. The terms lactation and milk squirt bring forth a bevy of results on PornHub; a wealth of fetish sites focus solely on the genre. And breast milk is a big seller in countries including Japan, where select bars sell the life-giving elixir—sometimes even "straight from the tap" for the right price.

Breasts and nipples are already highly eroticized. Lactation fetishists are simply taking an existing desire and milking it for all it's worth.



E-stim

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

This week's word is *e-stim.*

e-stim (*n*) the practice of applying measured electric currents to the body for the purpose of sexual pleasure

Jackson carefully affixed e-stim nodes onto his partner's labia and watched with pleasure as the small electroshocks pushed her to climax.

It seems like something out of a Frankenstein movie, but this is no horror trope; it's a relatively new and somewhat, uh, shocking way to get off. You know the tingle you feel coursing up and down your spine when you're near that special person? Imagine that but with the addition of actual measurable voltage. That's electrostimulation, also known as electrosex and our word of the week.

You may see these terms and think *ouch*, but when used correctly, e-stim provides a delicate tickling sensation and not the defibrillator jolt one might imagine. Our nervous systems are already made up of electric currents; electrosex simply taps into them.

E-stim can be very involved, including clamps for nipples and labia, vaginal probes, electrified cock rings and butt plugs—and if you're dedicated, you can invest in an e-stim kit that often includes a power box and sticky pads with electrodes.

A rule of thumb for beginners: Keep all electric activity below the waist and away from your heart to avoid disturbing its natural rhythm. Nipple play should be reserved for experienced "stimmers."

How did humanity discover the low-voltage joy of e-stim? It grew out of the "medfet," or medical fetish, community, and the technology had existed for decades before being repurposed for a kinkier use. Today's e-stim kit evolved from the medical TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit that uses electric currents to target muscle pain. Now it generates a completely different kind of buzz.

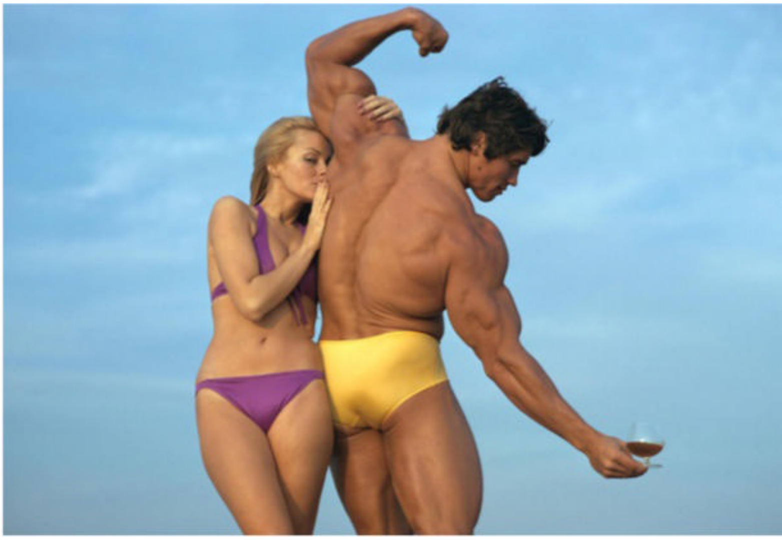
PLAYBACK

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES

Snapshots from our history courtesy of the Playboy Archives

A young Arnold Schwarzenegger grips a snifter of California brandy as model and actor Joyce Mandel grips him. Photographer Mario Casilli captured the pair for It's a Naive Little California Brandy, an article by food writer Emanuel Greenberg about the growing popularity of the Golden State's version of the French spirit. An accomplished bodybuilder but not yet the cultural heavyweight he is today, in 1975 the future governor of California was already a five-time Mr. Olympia winner. Two years after his PLAYBOY shoot, he spoke candidly about sex and bodybuilding with the magazine's sister publication Oui while promoting the documentary Pumping Iron. "We had girls backstage giving head, then all of us went out and I won," he said. "It didn't bother me at all; in fact, I went out there feeling like King Kong." Check out Greenberg's take on delicious California brandies, including classic cocktail recipes, at iPlayboy.com—where you can also read the January 1988 Playboy Interview with Schwarzenegger.

CALIFORNIA, 1975



PLAYBACK

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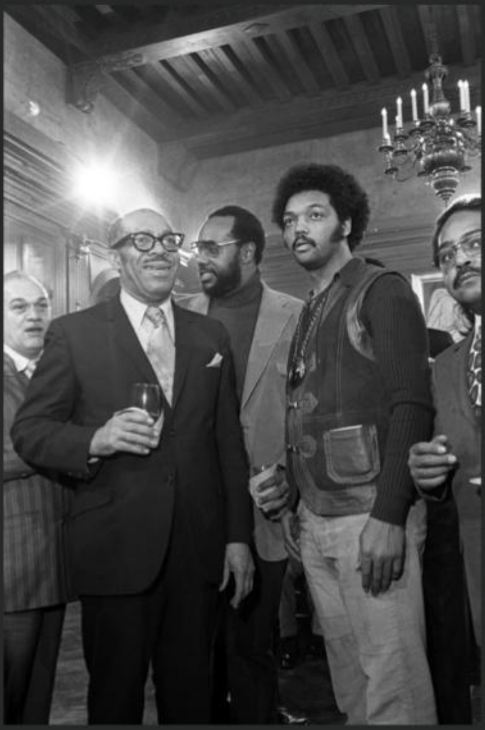

CHICAGO, 1972

Civil rights legends (from left) T.R.M. Howard, Thomas Todd, Jesse Jackson and Cecil Hale attend a PUSH event at Hugh Hefner's original Playboy Mansion. Jackson had founded PUSH, or People United to Serve Humanity, in 1971. Jackson and Hefner remained friends across the decades. After Hefner's September 2017 death, Jackson wrote about him for PLAYBOY's 2017 special tribute edition celebrating the life of the legendary magazine founder. "When Hugh Hefner's light passed through the prism of my life, what I saw was a powerful ray of support for racial and social justice around the world," Jackson wrote. "Hefner brought people together from all walks of life to talk and to learn from each other. He did so much to illuminate the darkness." Jackson was the subject of the renowned Playboy Interview in November 1969 and again in June 1984; to read both, visit iPlayboy.com.

A VISION OF BEAUTY

Amy Sharp

Instagram **@amyrenee088**

Photography by **Alyssa Miller | @alyssa.miller.photo**
MUA **Andre Lecca-Cuevas | @andreleccacuevas2.0**

Such an absolute honor to have you on Playboy! Tell us about your modeling journey so far. I got back into modeling around 2018 when I lost a lot of weight and got back in shape. I started doing TFP shoots just for fun and to boost my confidence, but that quickly led to paid work. From there I was published in numerous magazines and publications, including Playboy and FHM. In 2022 I joined an agency based in LA, which has led to even bigger opportunities, including numerous billboards, and walking in New York Fashion Week and Paris Fashion Week this past September.

How would you describe your personal style? I dress super casually on a day-to-day basis, usually workout clothes 90% of the time as I work from home. I do love to dress up when I go out though, and I have a fetish for sexy stiletto shoes and a high-quality handbag! My favorite handbag is a Louis Vuitton purse I got during NYFW last year, and my favorite shoes are a sexy pair of classic Loubuittons.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? I love traveling internationally, learning about other cultures, and seeing how people live all around the world! My favorite places I've been to include Iceland, Finland, Peru, Cuba, Mexico, London, Paris, and Amsterdam! If I had to choose a top favorite, I would say Iceland because of its unique geography! You have glaciers, volcanoes, hot springs, and ice caves all in one place - it's the closest thing to being on another planet.

What was the biggest lesson from your worst breakup? My biggest lesson learned is to never compromise yourself, your values, your hobbies, or your passions for someone else. I once stopped dancing - my biggest passion - because it made my ex jealous, and that only led to resentment. That experience taught me the importance of staying true to yourself, no matter what.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I believe that the majority of humans are only tapping into a tiny fraction of their true potential, so my goal for 2025 is to see just how much more I can achieve. For me, that means continuing to level up in my HR career, modeling and dance—defending my title as the US Pro-Am Mambo Champion, competing in 3-4 more national and international dance competitions, walking the runway at NY Fashion Week, and growing my HR Consulting Business. I'm also excited to take my daughter on an adventure through Italy and Spain. Beyond that, I have plenty of dance, fitness, and learning goals, but it's not about ticking boxes it's about discovering what's truly possible for me.

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I was born in Northern Indiana, but deep down, I'm basically a Latina at heart. I'm obsessed with Latin culture the food, the music, the dancing it's everything to me. My playlists are all Spanish music, mostly bachata, salsa, and reggaeton. In the next year or two, I'm planning to buy a rental property in Tulum, Mexico so I can immerse myself in the culture even more.

What are some of your personal favorite recipes or meals that you enjoy cooking at home? I love teaching my daughter how to cook our weekly tradition is trying out at least one new recipe together. We're big foodies and enjoy all kinds of cuisines, but our favorites are Mexican, Italian, Thai, Indian, and, of course, sushi.

Who has been the biggest influence or role model in your life, and why? Two of my biggest influences are my dance partner, Kevin Ubillus, and my coach, Milagros Lareto. They're both National Rhythm finalists and 6x US Mambo Champions. What's truly incredible is their story they moved to the US from Peru with nothing, learned a new language, became world-champion dancers, and are now opening their own dance studio. When I think about everything they've accomplished and the obstacles they've had to overcome, I'm beyond inspired. It's an honor to work so closely with them. They push me daily and have been challenging me to grow as a dancer for the past seven years. They saw potential in me as a dancer long before I ever did, and for that, I'll always be forever grateful.

What is the absolute worst thing a man can do to completely put you off? The biggest turn-off for me is a man with no goals or ambitions. His goals can be completely different from mine, but it's so attractive when a man has goals in all areas of life career, fitness/health, hobbies, etc.

Would you rather be loved, respected, or admired? Loved, because a loving relationship would encompass all three.

What are your future goals and aspirations for the future? In 2025 I am super excited to be walking again in NY Fashion Week and Miami Swim week! I'm also super excited to be competing in numerous dance competitions around the US, and possibly Puerto Rico. I have a big fashion campaign with a brand I can't disclose just yet, as well as a few other publications in the works! I'm also working on expanding my HR Consulting Agency and hopefully bring on my first employees this year.

Where can our readers keep up with your latest news and events? I'm most active on Instagram feel free to follow my personal account at @amyrenee088 or my agency account @aria.reneexoxo. Thank you for all your love and support.

Thank you for your time, Do you have any final motivational words for our readers? Thank you for having me! My final words would be this.In a world that is becoming increasingly divided, especially in the online space, love and kindness are more powerful than ever. We might not always agree with one another, but it's essential that we approach each other with empathy and respect. Love has the ability to bridge gaps, heal wounds, and bring us together in ways nothing else can. Without it, we can't truly move forward or make a lasting difference. Always pause and choose love over judgment, kindness over anger, and connection over division that's how we'll make any real change.

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The Future Is Dorian Electra

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RICHIE TALBOY**

In an industry that favors those who play by the rules, this pop shape-shifter proves the power of defiant individuality

BY **ALLIE VOLPE**

“Basically, I’m Einstein,” Dorian Electra quips. “Like, hello, I’m a genius.”

The pop artist, who uses gender-neutral pronouns, is recounting the time they traced the mathematical steps in Albert Einstein’s mass-energy equivalence formula, E=mc2, in front of fellow students at a Chicago liberal arts college. How fulfilling it was at the time to understand, at least tangentially, the thought processes of the famed physicist. The particulars of the calculations are now a bit foggy. “I swear to God, I don’t have a good memory for details like that,” Electra says. “But I don’t think it was a waste of time. It gives me a boost. My ego is like, Yeah, one time I understood that.”

Electra often performs such mental gymnastics, attempting to dissect complexities in music, gender expression and personal history. The 27-year-old can analyze memes and philosophical theories, or gender stereotypes and choreography, while playing their own devil’s advocate. They possess a mental stamina that never seems to wane. Frankly, being Dorian Electra is exhausting.

To be in their presence is anything but. Striking in an aquamarine blouse with a freshly dyed mullet to match, the artist brings a palpable vibrance to any room, both in this midtown Manhattan restaurant and, the following week, in the small East Williamsburg, Brooklyn venue where they’ll perform for two sold-out nights. In rapid-fire staccato sentences, Electra speaks on the intersection of entertainment and education, the entrepreneurial nature of working at a strip club and how they avoid the guilt that can accompany the choice to embody traditional elements of both masculinity and femininity. That last pairing is what the gender-fluid artist (their gender identity continually changes: “I’m masculine and feminine, I’m both, I’m neither, I don’t give a fuck”) celebrates on *Flamboyant*, their debut album.

Over a tight 31 minutes, *Flamboyant* wastes no time setting scenes. The listener is catapulted into Electra’s futuristic pop universe, where a vocalist can employ both falsetto and gritty chest belts, where hip-hop lives alongside baroque and heavy metal — often in the same song — and where a performer can wear suits and glitter, a penciled-on mustache and leather shorts. Without a road map, Electra acted on instinct and created music where there was none before. Now living in Los Angeles, they released *Flamboyant* independently this past summer. They also booked their own headlining tour last fall, had a run of dates opening for Charli XCX and handle most of their own press. Dorian Electra has always done things their own way.

“Dorian is so true to their self-expression, and that’s really rare in pop,” says queer artist and activist Mykki Blanco, who is featured alongside Electra on the Charli XCX track “Femmebot.” “Their creative control is admirable, and they’re really handling themselves well as far as controlling their narrative and creating original work for all of us to discover their world.”

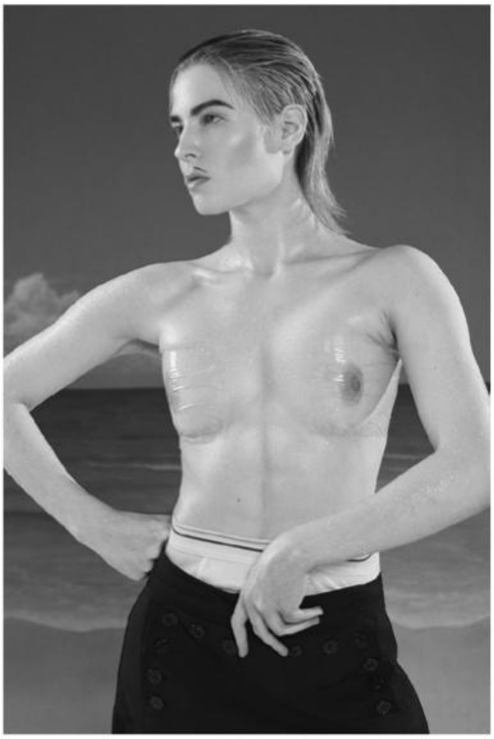
Electra — born Dorian Electra Fridkin Gomberg—was raised in a liberal bubble in Houston by parents Paul, who works in real estate and performs in a cover band, and Paula, a musician, entrepreneur and jewelry maker. The couple bestowed a gender-neutral name on their only child, who wore it with pride. Electra didn’t play with dolls but wasn’t into sports either. Instead, they experimented with performance, dressing up in drag and idolizing Austin Powers. “Part of the humor comes from the fact that he thinks he’s really sexy, but he’s gross,” Electra says. “That masculine ideal definitely shaped my personal sexual orientation or idea of gender. It’s way more on the Austin Powers side of the spectrum in terms of outlandish, ridiculous, kind of borderline grotesque.”

After Paul and Paula divorced when Electra was five, Paula dated women. Paul remarried, and Electra went to live with him and his new wife. Although Electra’s parents were open-minded — “We always had gay family friends, and someone in our family is trans; these things were just a normal part of our family life” — their conservative stepmother disapproved. She criticized Electra’s decision to eschew church, conduct a research project on HIV/AIDS and more.

In fourth grade, Electra tried theater. Hardly athletic, not quite skilled at drawing and stifled academically by attention deficit disorder, Electra found in musical theater a space in which they were praised for their talent. But telling other

“For me, everything is a passing phase. Everything is always changing.”

people’s stories has its limits: The look, feel, tone and narrative arc are already determined. At 14, Electra discovered they could craft their own stories. Along with a friend, they created a fan video for the English band the Horrors, filmed on the friend’s MacBook webcam. Electra then began to use digital storytelling for school, writing songs and making videos for book reports and, eventually, research projects at Shimer College in Chicago. Without realizing it, they were carving a niche as an academic performance artist.



“It started as the perfect synthesis of all my interests. I love all this academic stuff,” Electra says. “It’s also a good mental exercise for me to break down these complex things in a way that can be accessible to many people in more casual, layperson terms.”

It was Electra’s video projects that caught the attention of the creative team at Refinery29. The women’s website commissioned the artist to make a sex education video in 2015, granting them the freedom to create however they pleased. The result was a bubble-gum song and a video that sees Electra dressed in a clitoris costume, accompanied by backup dancers in vulva attire. The video was a hit — it won a Webby Award in 2017 — so Refinery29 sent them off to make more. Electra returned with campy visual essays on the history of vibrators, drag, high heels and the marginalization of women, people of color and the trans and immigrant communities. In an age when memes proliferate at lightning speed on TikTok and editorial spaces have largely pivoted to video, Electra’s mastery of the medium proved to be vital to their career. It still is: The videos for “Flamboyant,” “Daddy Like,” “Man to Man” and “Career Boy” use storytelling to upend gender stereotypes.

While the video projects allowed Electra to explore the queer and feminist movements, they also led the artist to explore their own gender identity. During the 2016 production of a video on the history of drag, Electra befriended queer and trans people in Chicago, some of whom used *they/them* pronouns. Electra never identified with the term *nonbinary*, but *gender fluid*, with the way it paints gender as constantly morphing, felt right: “When I finally switched to *they/them*, it was really hard for me to ask people who had known me from before to use them,” Electra says. “And then everyone questions your authenticity, like ‘You’re just doing this for marketing purposes. You just feel like you want to be special.’ It happens to trans people too. They’re questioned: ‘Is this a passing phase?’ But for me, everything is a passing phase. Everything is always evolving and changing.”

Remaining in Chicago after college, Electra discovered how to use their body — for performance, for pleasure — as a server and topless dancer at a strip club. After answering a Craigslist ad for what they assumed was a catering gig, they were ushered onto a club floor wearing two layers of thongs, a skimpy fishnet dress and high heels, and carrying a handful of alcohol-filled test tubes. The tips from $5 boob shots weren’t enough to pay the bills, so they opted for higher-paying private topless dances. One shift paid out more than Electra had ever earned before. “I never felt that confident in my body, because I was not this feminineideal type,” Electra says. “But these people are literally paying money to see me and my body and feel me grinding on them.”

It could have been an opportunity to rebel against traditional femininity, to shelve the attributes that appealed to the club's clientele, but Electra took to the role. Dancing for strangers felt sexy; it was a turn-on.

"I've actually embraced those gendered ideas," they say. "I spent so many years in college and after trying to socialize myself into those things that now I've accepted them, and I'm learning to be okay with enjoying them too. There's nothing wrong with me wanting to feel really feminine or submissive, or the opposite — because I also felt a lot of guilt about that once I started getting into feminism and then discovered my own gender identity. I'm like, Wait, is this at odds with my gender identity?"

Electra took their own feminine parts, as well as the camp and garishness of male idols David Bowie and Austin Powers, to create a new kind of pop star — one who cheekily insists on being called "Mister" and subverts the accepted meaning of flamboyance into an on-the-nose personal treatise. "It's this idea of whimsical self-awareness," they say. While many artists (Lady Gaga, Björk) use grandeur as a means of expression, Electra uses humor and rebellion as a guide to usher in what Blanco describes as "a new generation of queer talent who will be judged not on the politics of their identity but hopefully on the quality and awesomeness of their music and creative merits."

This is the Dorian Electra who lives on *Flamboyant,* unbounded by genre or gender. In the early months of 2019, the artist and six producers crafted the majority of the album. Some of that time was spent in a Las Vegas Airbnb where Electra would bounce from room to room, going to each collaborator whenever the session's energy dulled. Full of outrageously glossy club music that uses gender as performance, *Flamboyant* challenges the confines of conventional pop. On stage the songs come to life through choreography, Electra's chameleonic vocal stylings and smoldering glances to the audience, and two bearded backup dancers, all three performers dressed in intergalactic-gladiator bondage gear.

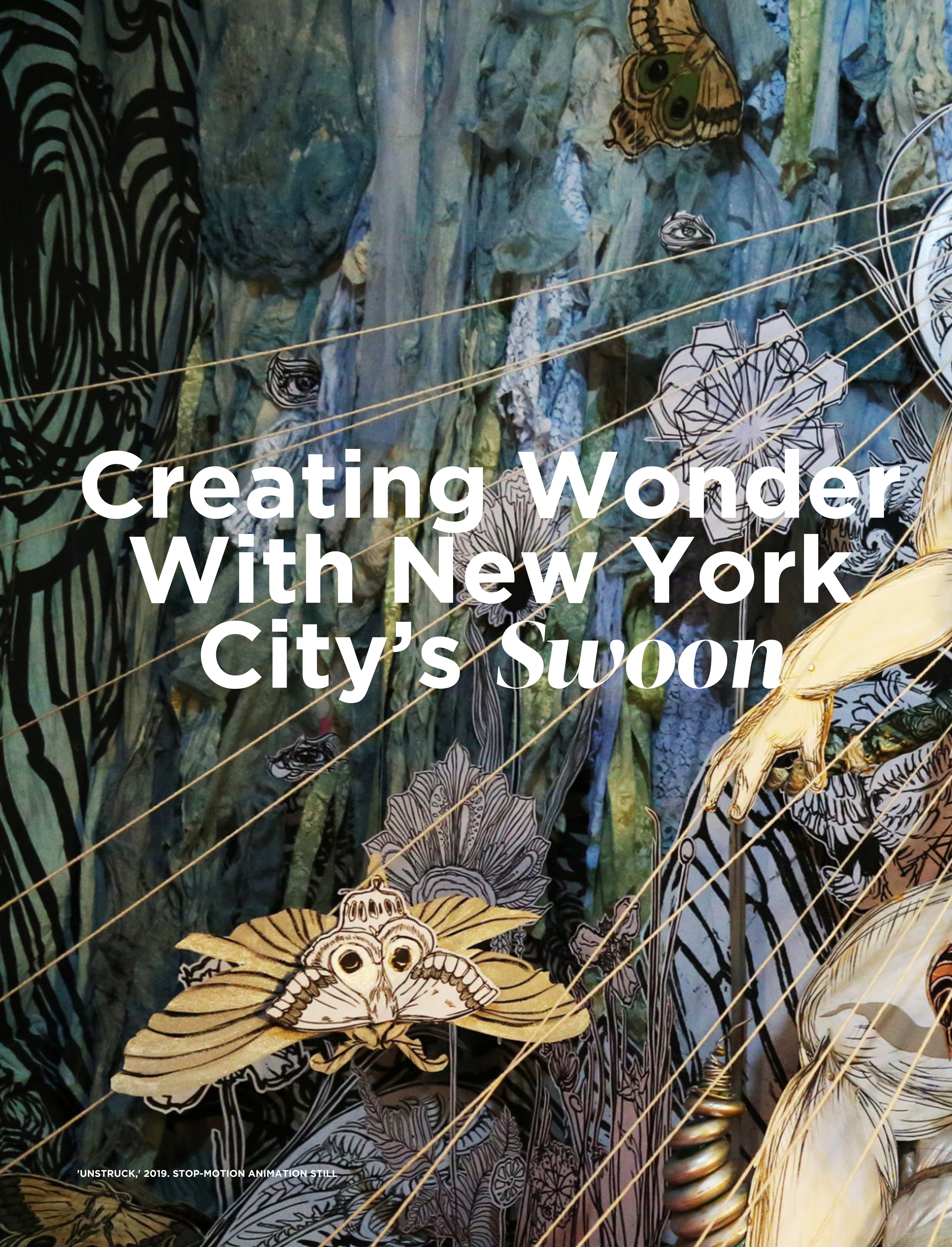
Whether blending harpsichord and dubstep beats — and somehow managing to make the result sound cohesive — or taping their breasts in photo shoots, Electra wants to challenge audiences. "I know my voice is really annoying and off-putting," they say. "But I'd rather risk alienating people because of that than not excite them because my voice was forgettable."

You would be remiss to forget Electra. In fact, it might be impossible. You can hear their mind racing in real time, witness them stumbling onto a theoretical discovery they hadn't before considered. You can see their past and future painted in the details of their words.

Electra has an afternoon of unscheduled nothingness following our interview, though I suspect they don't need a plan to know where they're going, in the moment or in general. "The thesis of what I believe is everything's way more complex than people want to make it," they say. "Things change and evolve, and that's why fluidity in all areas seems to make the most sense to me as my life philosophy."

There's nothing concrete in the world of Dorian Electra. There never was, and if we're lucky, there never will be. ■

Creating Wonder With New York City's *Swoon*



'UNSTRUCK,' 2019. STOP-MOTION ANIMATION STILL

After 20 years on the scene, the artist's mythological creations evolve

BY **ROMY OLTUSKI**

The artist known as Swoon sits at a sketch table in her Red Hook, Brooklyn studio, fiddling with a disembodied papier-mâché head.

"There's nothing private," she says, running a hand through her wild curls as I roam one of two rooms she rents in a labyrinthine artists-and-makers' complex. Behind her hangs a large-scale mural depicting gritty but feminine myth-like scenes of motherhood. Smaller, ethereal cut-out portraits of women, many of them family and friends, are arranged in small clusters on the surrounding walls.

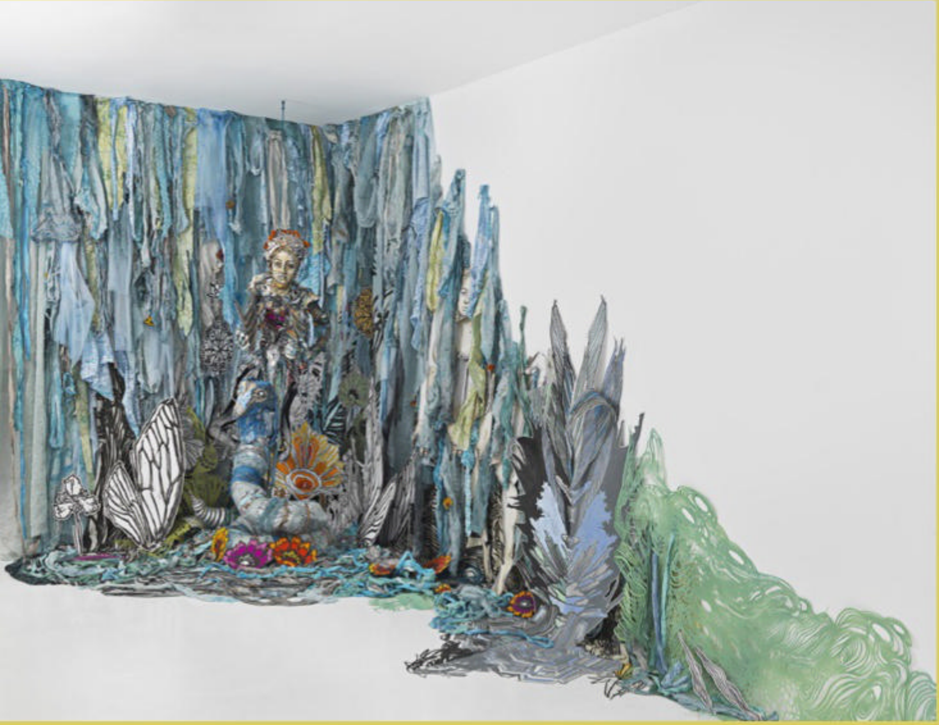
Because she hosted a party here recently, her studio is tidier than usual, she says, seemingly by way of apology.

The spaces Swoon creates are more often overflowing: Her recent show Cicada, at the Jeffrey Deitch gallery in New York, features a tangle of wire and cloth spilling out of the wall into a lush, overgrown swamp-like scene. Paper flowers and insects swarm a mer-like character, who cracks her ribs open to reveal snakes uncoiling from her heart. The fabric jumble appears to be gobbling up another figure, its limbs disappearing like moss-choked flotsam.

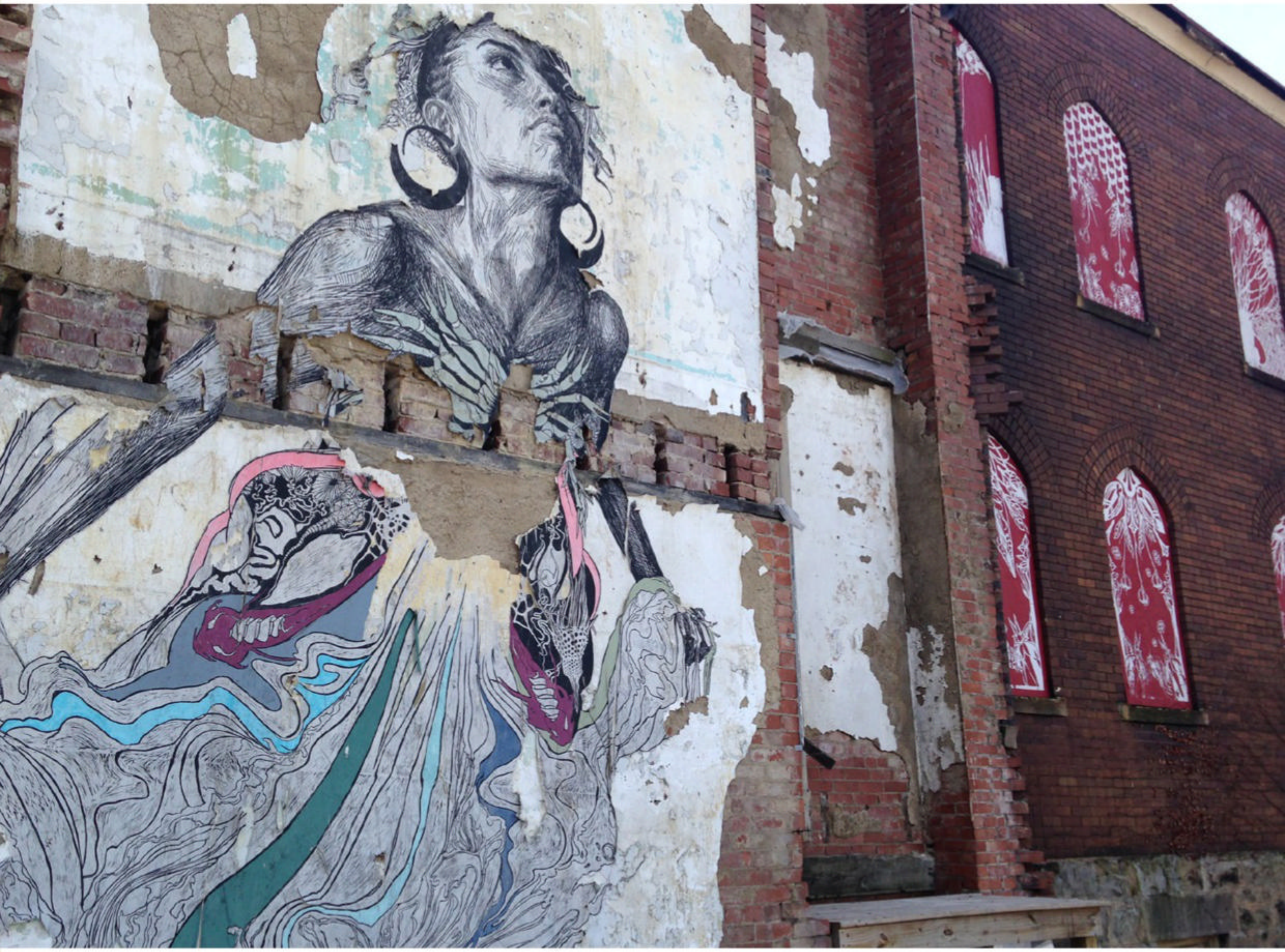
The recent body of work she's been developing, beginning with Cicada, marks a new direction for Swoon. Injecting her characters with movement, she has adopted into her practice an entirely new medium she's spent the past two years teaching herself: stop-motion film. Meanwhile, her visual language has taken on a more explicitly sinister and introspective tone, a departure for an artist who made her name beautifying the outside world.

Swoon, born Caledonia Curry in New London, Connecticut (she spent most of her childhood in Daytona Beach, Florida), began pasting her dreamy ink-block portraits on city walls in the late 1990s. Alongside peers like Shepard Fairey, Banksy and her good friend JR, she became central to a youth movement fueling street art's ascent. Swoon was one of the few women to gain recognition in that world. Her bold, feminine murals, with nods to Greek mythology, soon captivated major museums and galleries, which she filled with immersive multimedia installations.

Her 2014 exhibit Submerged Motherlands shaded viewers under a paper tree that reached the height of the Brooklyn Museum's 72-foot-tall rotunda. It was the museum's first solo show dedicated to a living street artist.



Cicada, 2019, installation view at Jeffrey Deitch gallery.
***Photographed by** Genevieve Hanson*



Thalassa, 2013, street paste-up.

From early on, Swoon saw art as a medium for activism, creating “spaces of wonder” that bring people together. In New Orleans, together with the New Orleans Airlift collective, she created a musical village whose ramshackle treehouses double as functioning instruments. With her community of punk artists and DIY craftspeople she famously built three rafts out of garbage and sailed them across the Adriatic Sea and into the Venice Biennale, uninvited. The renegade crew invited onlookers to join them onboard.

“Swoon’s practice is based in generosity,” says Anne Pasternak, the director of the Brooklyn Museum and a longtime champion of Swoon. “She wants to create dignified, humanistic, beautiful things about people, for people. She uplifts those who are less visible in our society, and she transforms the most banal and even devastated sites into places for real beauty.”

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Swoon launched a decade-long project building colorful, disaster-resistant homes in the remote village of Cormiers. Having just finished the rafts, Swoon says, “I was working with a lot of artists and builders that knew how to confront exceptionally difficult situations and problem solve in unusual ways. I had an instinct that we could make that skillset useful.”

In Philadelphia’s Kensington neighborhood, which has one of the highest rates of opiate overdoses in the country, she leads an art therapy workshop for people in the throes of addiction. It’s a project she plans to grow in tandem with her outspoken efforts to combat the stigma surrounding addiction.

If there’s a thread that runs through Swoon’s diverse body of work, it’s “that idea that creativity can be a really powerful part of how you rebuild after disasters of any kind,” she says. “Social, physical, all different kinds.”

Submerged Motherlands, 2014, installation view at Brooklyn Museum of Art. ***Photographed by*** *Tod Seelie.*

The Music Box, 2012, New Orleans. ***Photographed by*** *Tod Seelie*

Swoon's early life was colored by the chaos of her parents' heroin addiction and struggles with mental illness. Forgiving them took years of therapy and meant reconciling memories of fear and trauma with memories of joy. "I literally thought my mom was going to kill me sometimes," she says, describing a weeklong psychosis her mother experienced when Swoon was six. "And my mom would bake big zucchini bread and take me to art classes and be this wonderful person, and those two things are just true."

That dual nature became a central refrain in Swoon's work, the figure of "dark mother goddess" looming large in many of her installations. Partially autobiographical, her art was both an escape and a form of therapy.

"Almost whatever I'm doing, it's going to be through art," she says. "Am I thinking through a problem? It's going to happen through art. Am I healing all these old wounds? It's going to happen through art. Am I getting friends together? Art."

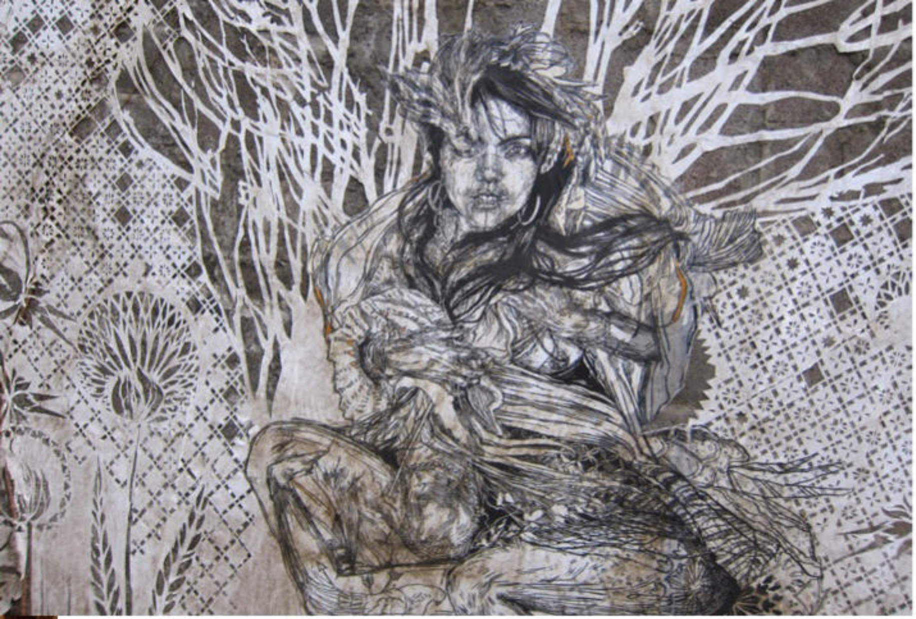
In Cicada and in her growing body of stop-motion films, Swoon uses art to go inward, unearthing the trauma lodged in parts of her mind she hadn't dared explore.

Behind the swamp-like installation that welcomes visitors to Cicada and an adjoining room filled with portraits of her friends is the show's centerpiece: a small movie theater where a five-minute, semi-narrative reel brings Swoon's characters to life.

Their awkward, fitful transformations are as discomfiting as they are mesmerizing. In one vignette, a Raggedy Ann doll is smothered by the "tarantula mother," a paper spider with an anthropomorphic head and snake-like tongues. Cicadas flit their wings in haunted home scenes, colorful flower beds and underwater dream worlds—which were actually filmed underwater; Swoon spent last May at an artists' residency established in Robert Rauschenberg's former estate, sinking her drawings into the late pop legend's swimming pool to capture the serene "amniotic world" of rebirth. ("Some of them survived," she says enthusiastically.)

Her decision to introduce what she calls "time-based storytelling" into her work was driven by a head-on collision with temporality. In 2013 Swoon lost her mother to lung cancer and, a year and a half later, her father to suicide. It forced the artist to reckon with the past. "It almost felt as though I got sucked out backward through my childhood," she says. "All this stuff got re-enlivened, and I had to deal with it."

Swimming Cities of Switchback Sea, 2008, on the Hudson River. ***Photographed by*** *Tod Seelie*



Monica, 2013, street paste-up

After that inflection point, the personal nature and raw emotional depth of her work reached a new pitch. "I've been really outward all my life, working out on the street, working in community," she says. "And I just felt this call of like, Girl, you need to get inside and you need to work through some things and you need to to be introspective."

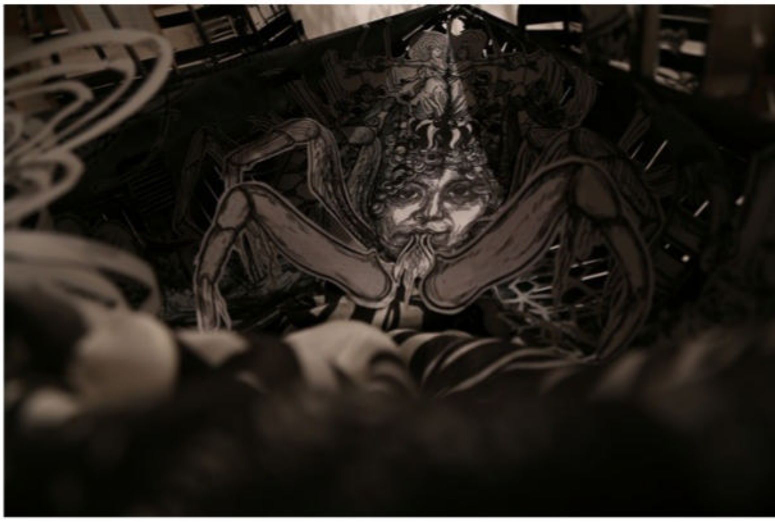
When she did, she says, "I was like, Hey, there's this old dream I had 20 years ago of making films, and street work and community-based work just kind of took center stage. But actually, this is still here."

Swoon sees the stuttering nature of stop-motion as an apt parallel to the disassociation she experienced as a child. "When you're tiny and things are shithouse crazy, one of the coping mechanisms that's available is to just be like, Bonk, I am not even here; I am somewhere else."

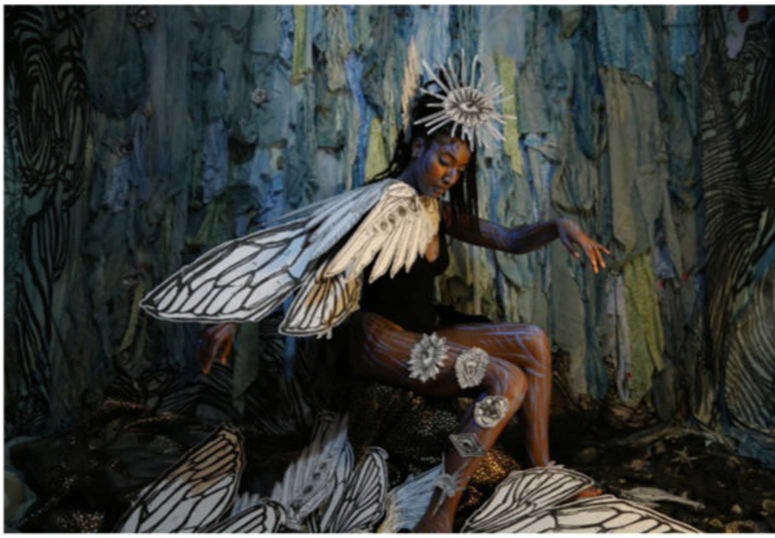
Art allowed her to create those other worlds, but it also left her feeling "there were gaps in the frame" when it came to her sense of reality. She grew up fearing that her family's history of mental illness would eventually catch up to her. "I was always like, I'm just going to get mine."

Cicada is Swoon's unfiltered confrontation of past trauma, but it's also a reverie on the transformation that introspection can bring. "I called it Cicada because of the way the cicadas go underground and do this incredible hibernation process and then emerge, like out of these other forms of themselves," she says.

While the show began a new phase in the artist's career, it also celebrated a homecoming: The Jeffrey Deitch gallery is the site of Swoon's first major show, which in 2005 garnered international attention almost overnight; she was 27. As a curator, Deitch carved out a niche spotting promising artists and facilitating their wildest, most unsellable ideas, and his gallery at 76 Grand Street became the epicenter of a new wave of experimental multimedia art, including



Tarantula Mother, 2018,
stop-motion animation still.



Angel as Seraph, 2019,
stop-motion animation still.

Swoon's cobbled-together cityscape installation there, whose opening drew some 800 people, by her memory. The afterparty was an impromptu block party where a noise-punk band performed atop an illegally parked truck and gallery-goers crowd-surfed the artist down a shoulder-to-shoulder-packed Grand Street.

"I was like, Anything else is going to feel less than," says Swoon, who was nervous to return to the reopened space 14 years later.

The night before Cicada opened in November, she posted about her insecurity on Instagram. "I'm 41 years old now…and no longer a central, active part of a spontaneous youth movement (which was then exploding all over the world). I'm just me now. Callie. Learning a new thing, and showing it to the world," she wrote. "I couldn't help but compare myself to myself."

Swoon no longer considers herself a street artist. It's been years since she's wheat-pasted on city walls with any regularity. Going underground, as she describes it, is part of what has allowed her to explore the innermost crevices of her subconscious.

It has also freed her to create her most boldly sexual work yet.

"My work has had this reputation for being PG," she says of her earlier pieces. For street artists, there's a certain civic duty to self-censor because audiences of graffiti art often haven't chosen to be; they encounter it on their way to work, to school.

But seeing her community of artists and activists reconvene to uplift her was joyful in another way. "We found ways to make it beautiful and fun but to also acknowledge, 'Yeah, we've grown up,'" she says, adding with a laugh, "I don't want to surf Grand Street again."

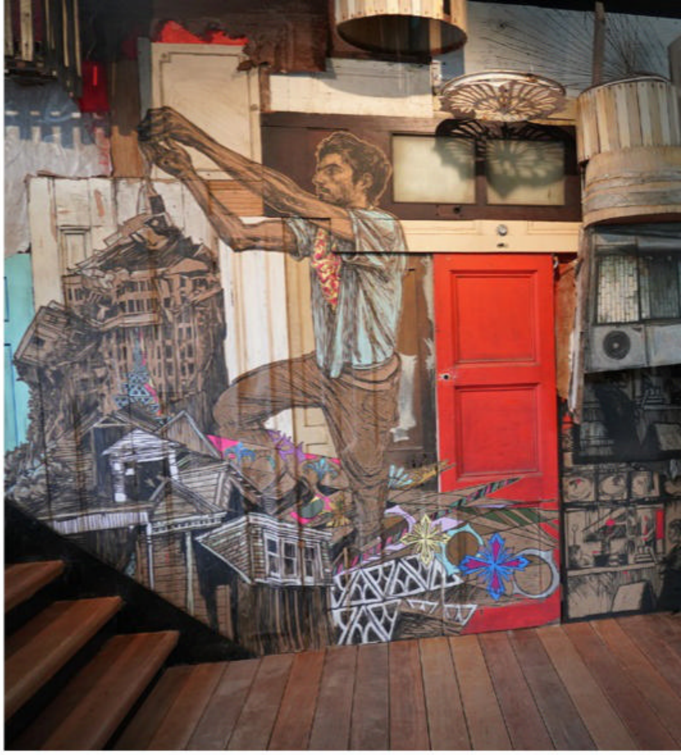
"My whole life, working out on the street, I had this feeling that you're sort of part of this community in a way that you need to be responsible for," she says. "Who is seeing this? What's it like for them?" But in galleries and on film, viewers choose to enter Swoon's world. "Now I get to be like, What is beautiful to me? What is sexy to me?"

In one life-size drawing in Cicada, a naked woman sits cross-legged, wearing a strap-on dildo. "I just wanted to make a sexy portrait," Swoon says of the image, a stark departure from her tunic-draped goddesses. "This is without a doubt the first time that I've done that." She thought twice about hanging it up in her studio, where her students would see it. "When I brought back this giant painting of my incredibly hot, sexy friend looking you straight in the eye with her dick out, I was just like, Is this fine?" she says with a laugh.

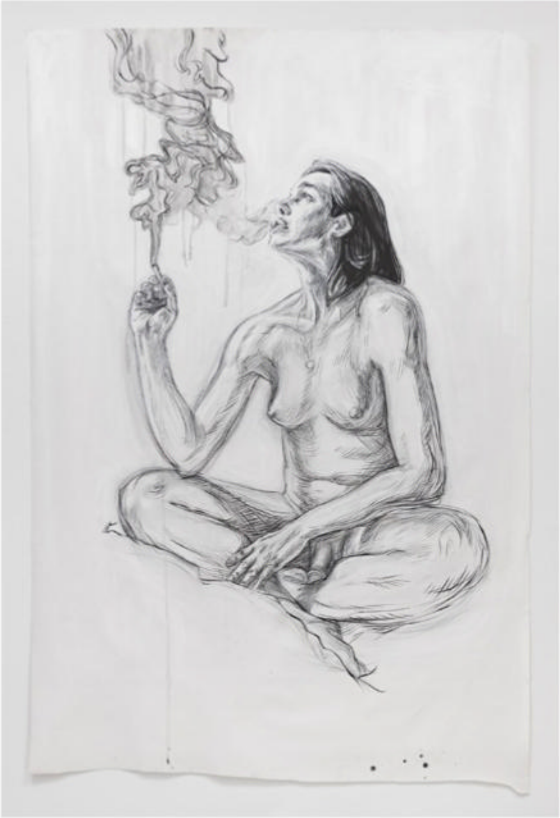
Swoon gestures to another portrait hanging in her studio, a nude drawing of the artist Monica Canilao. "She's been a friend and lover and collaborator for so many years. I always photograph her naked because she's fucking hot, but it's always been part of my private world. This was a moment where I thought, Okay, I'm ready to express some things that I really think are beautiful and sensual and sexy.… I'm a fucking grown-ass woman now. It's time. It's time for me to just own more of myself."

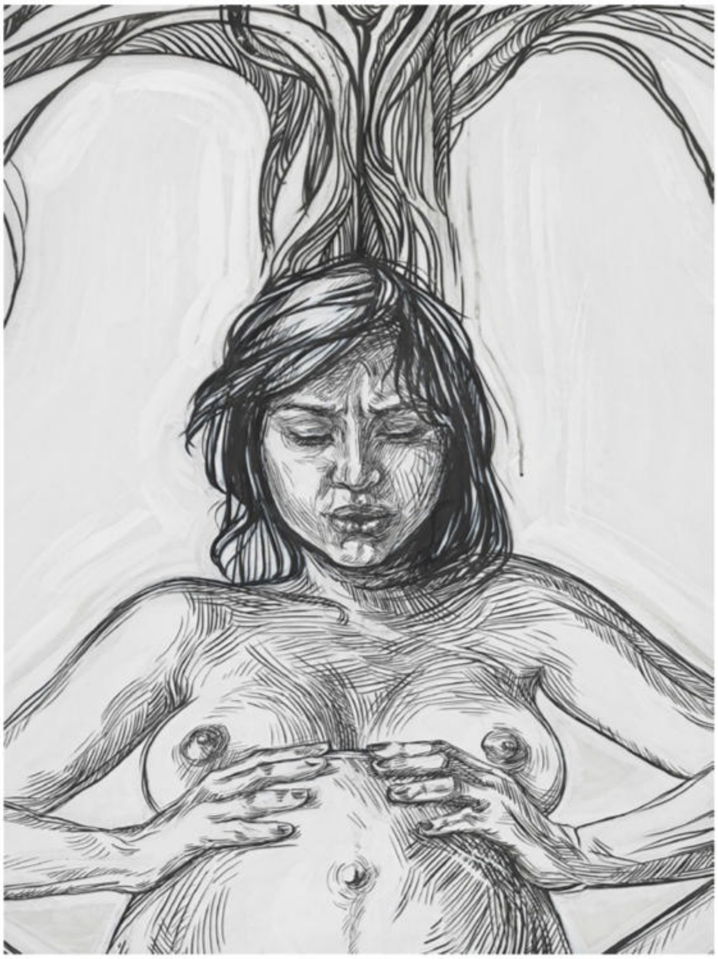
Since Cicada closed in February, Swoon has turned her attention to creating a feature-length animated children's film. It will be based on a fairytale she wrote about her mother's psychotic break. In the Grimm tradition, it may not actually be appropriate for children, she warns.

"I was like, What are you doing, Callie? This is so weird! But you know, sometimes as an artist you just get your marching orders, and you do them."

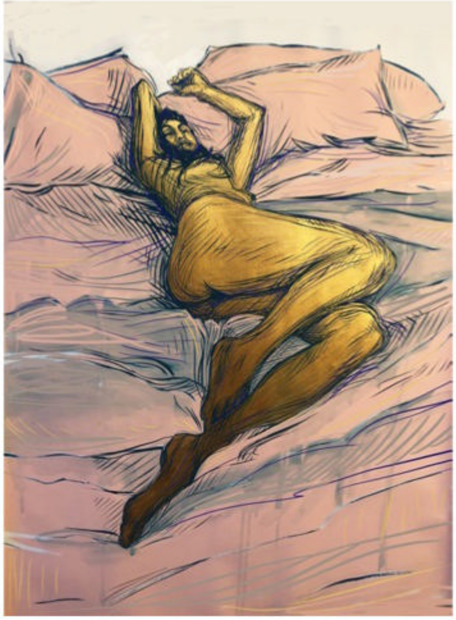


Time Capsule, 2019, installation view at Fluctart, Paris.

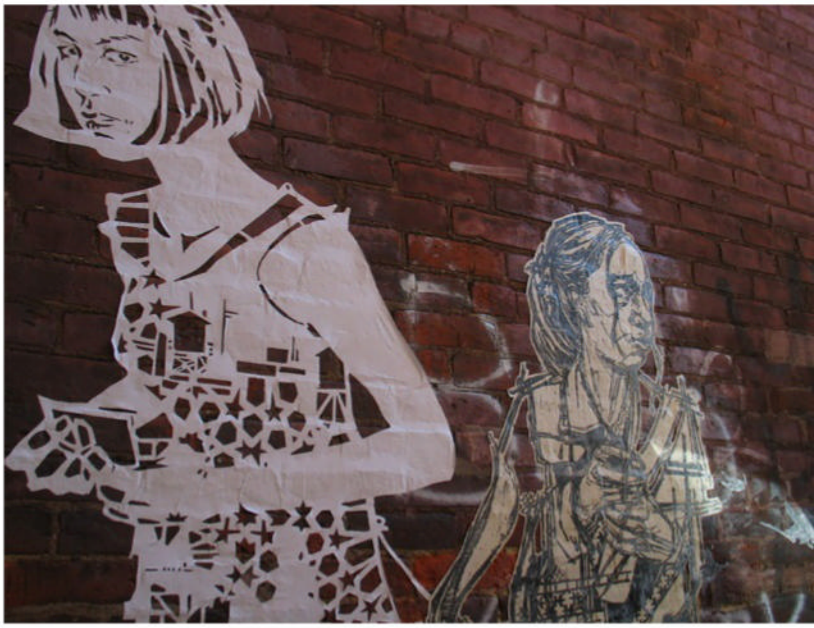




Birth, 2018, ink drawing on Mylar. ***Photographed by*** *Genevieve Hanson.*



Monica Reclining, 2020, acrylic paint on canvas.



Ameena and Annabella, 2014, street paste-up.

back *to* kali

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DANA TRIPPE**

What happens when an artist tosses the pop-star rule book in favor of fierce authenticity? Kali Uchis is ready to find out

BY **EVE BARLOW**

Kali Uchis does not like to be the center of attention. Our original lunchtime table wasn't in an open part of the restaurant, but she still preferred to move to a spot in the corner. Now nestled between two walls, she's protected and able to keep out of the way. She excuses herself for being shy with a nymph-like laugh.

At the age of 25, Uchis is often unsure of herself, but her brutal determination keeps her moving forward. She's hard to miss, dressed for the roller rink in blue denim and a vintage longsleeve T-shirt. Her lashes are extended, her lips are plumped and her nails form miniature Perspex daggers. Her hair is a wig.

"I just throw it on and then I'm done with hair!" she says.

The restaurant is in Studio City, which — like Uchis — is a bit of an outlier in Los Angeles. It's not *Valley* Valley; it's not Hollywood either. But if you know your chūtoro from your ōtoro, you know that Sushi Katsu-Ya is worth the trek. Uchis knows. She's a pescatarian, and she orders a baked crab hand roll that she manages to wrap her mouth around without ruining a smidgen of lip gloss. She talks fast and loose. She drinks hot tea. She spills a lot of it too.

When she put out her jazz-inflected neo-R&B album *Isolation* in 2018, Uchis received near-universal praise for her loner anthems. She collaborated with Tyler, the Creator; Damon Albarn; Steve Lacy; even Bootsy Collins. In interviews, however, journalists failed to get a read on her. An article in *The Fader* asked, who is the real kali uchis? Today, in the first week of 2020 — a year in which she'll release a new album (in the spring) and star in a movie *(Blast Beat)* that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival — it's becoming clearer who she is. She's someone who's finding her roots, someone who's taking the reins of her creativity, someone who's more accountable for her actions. Someone who means business.

"I been working," she says of the Christmas break. "It was hard for me when the new year started, because we went into a weekend. Do I not e-mail people that day?" She smiles warmly and shrugs. Last year was rough; Uchis was eager to wipe the slate clean.

"A lot of fucked-up shit happened in 2019 — technically two weeks ago, but I'm gonna leave it back there."

Personal or work?

"Um, a lot of personal stuff." She goes quiet. Over miso soup and popcorn shrimp it becomes obvious that some wounds are too fresh to be exposed.

"In 2020 I'm trying to move from a place of love," she says. "Be myself. I worked out the things I needed to at the end of 2019. I could bring in the new year knowing what I know."

• • •

The past year wasn't all bad. Uchis bought a house in a neighborhood a little deeper into the Valley.

"Growing up, I never had a safe space to be myself," she says. "My main dream was to be able to not ask anyone for shit — to take care of myself."

Kali Uchis grew up Karly-Marina Loaiza between Virginia and Colombia. She has three brothers and an older sister, and when they were little their house in Virginia was a safe space for immigrant cousins en route to their own American dreams. She shared her room with female relatives who passed through.

It wasn't a happy childhood. "The way my family communicates with each other can be really aggressive," she says. She learned how to defend herself. "People in school and my family were always making smart remarks about me. You learn how to have tough skin. You learn how to be combative."

In school, Uchis was a "super band nerd," playing piano and saxophone. She was quiet and escaped public speaking by ditching school. She wrote stories. She made clothes. To this day she wants to be a movie director; she's always writing plots. "Anything I could do in the creative process made me feel like I could escape my situation," she says. "From the moment I got my first job I was really good at saving my money."

At 15, Uchis began working odd jobs. She worked at a grocery store. She waited at a Mexican restaurant. Her last retail job was as a cashier. "All my friends were going out partying. I was paying bills."

At the low point of a long-strained relationship with her parents, Uchis, then 17, was cast out of the house and had to live in a parking lot in her Subaru. Soon thereafter she made her first mixtape, *Drunken Babble*, on GarageBand, debuting the results on a free download site in 2012. The internet was impressed — so impressed that the DIY swirl of samples, soul and synth-laden rap caught the attention of Diplo and Kaytranada, who helped her produce her first studio EP, 2015's *Por Vida*.

A North American tour led to a record deal with Virgin EMI, which led to *Isolation* in 2018, which led to a Grammy nomination. But her nascent stardom wasn't enough to heal her wounds.

"I was self-destructive in my career," she admits. "I'm opinionated. I fight with people online." Even with her increased visibility, Uchis took everything personally, as she had in her youth. "Being a public figure is being constantly up for display. It can really fuck with your mental health." (She contends that record labels should pay for their artists' therapy.) She has come to an important conclusion: "Criticism and flattery are the same thing. As long as people are talking about you, that's all that matters."

In 2017, Uchis came under fire for comments she made on Twitter, lashing out at critics who had accused her of manipulating her image to capitalize on her brownness. (The controversy stemmed from tweets that compared her differing looks on the cover of *Por Vida* and a promotional photo for the album.) She maintains she never intended to hurt anyone but admits she attacked people on bad days because it was her only vehicle for venting.

After the clash, she took a lengthy Twitter break. "It fucked me up," she says. She was too sensitive to be online. "Sometimes I just don't want to be fucking looked at."

Uchis went to therapy for the first time after her summer tour. She says she's never had a consistent support group: "I literally didn't have anyone to talk to. I'd never objected to a therapist. It's just that they're very expensive. It came to a point where I was like, 'You know what? I want my mental health to improve.' "

Mental health issues run in her family: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression. "A lot of family members have killed themselves, killed other people, been abusers, been abused, all types of ways," she says. "When you have that embedded in your DNA it can take a while to learn how to cope with it on a daily basis."

There is one guaranteed source of catharsis: performing on stage. Last year, touring with Jorja Smith, Uchis covered Radiohead's "Creep." It's a hypersexual rendition — more sensual than art rock. She's well-versed in Radiohead's catalogue, and she chose to cover the song because it's about being unloved. "It's a song for people who feel like they don't fit in — that's the story of my life."

She listened to "Creep" a lot in high school, around the time her niece, only seven months old, suddenly and tragically died. When Uchis talks about death she seems to disassociate. Her face goes blank. "I've lost a lot of people," she says. "I cried a few times when singing 'Creep.' "

Again she shrugs over the popcorn shrimp. "I'm not a big crier."

• • •

Once she settled into her new house last summer, Uchis decamped to Miami to work with producer Tainy, whose recent clients include reggaetón megastars Bad Bunny and J Balvin.

"I always wanted my second album to be predominantly in Spanish," she says. But she's not looking to replicate the successes of Balvin, Rosalía or others setting the Billboard charts ablaze with Spanish-language hits. "I love them, but our experiences are different," she says.

Her experience is rooted in a childhood spent boomeranging between two continents. Uchis went to school in Colombia for three years and made sure to visit there annually after relocating to the United States. (Her parents still live in Colombia.) She attended T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, which is nearly 80 percent minority. "We had a big Latino community, though not Colombian," she says.

She knew other Latino kids in Virginia who'd never visited their origin country and didn't speak Spanish. "They would be bullied if they were fresh off the boat. That's what they'd call you — an FOB," she says. "It's beautiful that people are now embracing those coming straight from our countries. That's part of what I wanted to do —capture that pride. I live in the U.S., but that doesn't mean my culture has to be washed away."

This new, as-yet-unnamed album is in Spanglish and was cranked out in one "super inspired" week. Her rise didn't

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WHAT IS

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AVAXHOME -

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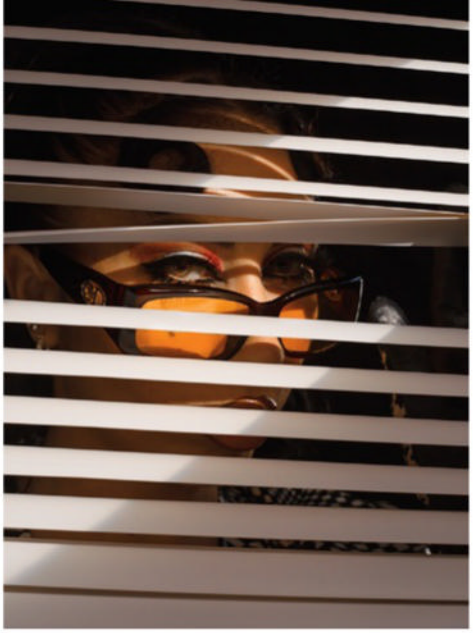
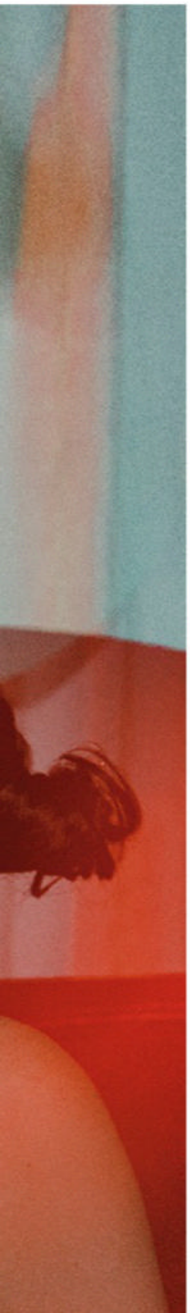
> “When I’m **dead** I want to be remembered in a **positive way,** but while I’m here I don’t mind being **misunderstood.”**





create second-album paralysis; if anything, Uchis feels liberated by success.

"I'm going back to how I used to write when I started," she says. "People might think I feel more pressure, but it's the opposite. Your first album is how you get your foot on your world. Now that's over I can do whatever I want."

Her first single, "Solita," released late last year, chimes with that sentiment. *"Solita, solita / Bailando aquí sola / Es mejor que con el diablo"* translates as "Alone, alone, dancing here alone is better than dancing with the devil."

• • •

Uchis offers few other details about the album but does play me five unfinished tracks after our meeting. Even if they're incomplete and untitled, they prove she's doing what she wants regardless of the success of Isolation and the stratospheric rise of Spanish-language music on the charts. Uchis's music is still in its own scintillating corner — a little moodier, a little slower, a little hotter. The tracks are hypnotic; listening to them is like being drenched in billows of intoxicating smoke. In one of them she sings, "I got what you need, I know what you like."

She explains that the record jumps between genres and moods: Some songs are vulnerable, some sexy, some sad, some empowered. "It takes me by surprise when people say, 'I like your confidence,' " she says. "I never felt like a confident person."

Clearly she projects confidence into her songs, manifesting the self-worth she seeks. I wonder aloud what fuels that ability when she's having a bad day.

She thinks. Uchis can't remember exactly when it happened, but when she was younger she became wise to other people's toxicity. "People can infect and train you in ways that deteriorate your self-esteem. They make you feel like you're worthless," she says. "Everything in my life is what I accept. The things that I've been through, I don't let them define me. That's an important part of life if you want to move forward and be better than you were yesterday."

Ingrained sexism is something she's had to overcome too. "There's a pedestal you should put yourself on in order to tell the world, 'I only accept this type of treatment from my friends, lovers, family,' " she says. "If you don't want to interact with me like I'm a queen, then you don't have to be in my life." This mentality has caused her to lose a lot of friends — and family. "It's tough. I'm a Cancer. I want to be a family-oriented person, but they keep doing stuff to piss me off!" She giggles and breathes a sigh of relief. "I'm so much happier than I used to be."

Her heroes are misunderstood figures, particularly female ones: Eartha Kitt, Amy Winehouse, Erykah Badu. Growing up she had few women in her life to admire (her elder sister was in foster care), so she looked to *Resident Evil* and *Kill Bill* for icons ("Women who were kicking ass!"). Consider that list of heroines: If any of them had paid too much attention to how they were perceived, it would have detracted from their power too.

"In a perfect world I would want people to see me the way I see myself," she says. "I can be hard on myself, but I know I'm a good person. I don't need people to see that about me. When I'm dead I want to be remembered in a positive way, but while I'm here I don't mind being misunderstood."

She continues to ponder her legacy, as though life could end at any moment. "I would like to be remembered for being.…" She flutters her lashes. "Iconic? And imperfect."

Most of the time she wants to hide in the corner. "If someone told me this would be my future, I'd think they were talking about a whole different person. You have to have good people skills, and I don't."

I disagree.

"I'm having a good day today," she says, smiling. "But if you had asked the wrong question.… I've had interviews where the person would have walked away thinking, This girl's such a bitch. If other people had been through half of what I've been through, they would have quit."

Before she goes, I ask which part of her new home is her favorite. The enthusiastic reply: the recording studio.

"I got a lot of pillows and plushy toys," she says. "My studio is like a little girl's room — all pink. When I go to make music I want it to feel like I'm back home in my dream room that I never got to have."

She grabs her Louis Vuitton and dabs on some more lip gloss before offering an embrace.

"I'm trying to rebuild my childhood."

Dior

PATTY DUKE. COURTESY **PENGUIN BOOKS**

How 'Valley of the Dolls' Became a *Rallying Cry* for Queer Communities

and Made a Lifelong Ally of Its Star

A conversation with Stephen Rebello, author of the dishy and delightful new 'Dolls! Dolls! Dolls!'

BY **JAMES RICKMAN**

Last week we ran an excerpt from the new book Dolls! Dolls! Dolls! Deep Inside Valley of the Dolls, the Most Beloved Bad Book and Movie of All Time. In it, author Stephen Rebello brings to life the on-set war between star Patty Duke and director Mark Robson, whose skirmishes included weaponized donuts. Throughout Rebello's book, the laughs are abundant, but so are the moments of wrenching struggle. And even as Dolls! offers such dishy delights as an up-close view of Judy Garland's disastrous and short-lived involvement in the movie, it's easy to drift back to Duke's perilous journey from Oscar-winning child star abused and exploited by her legal guardians, through the premiere of Dolls and its enshrinement as a beloved celluloid fiasco, through decades in and out of addiction and acclaim, and ultimately to grace.

Toward the end of the book, Rebello (who's also a screenwriter and Playboy contributing editor) reveals that Duke eventually started to speak out for others living with addiction, mental illness and trauma, and that she connected with legions of LGBTQ Dolls devotees who helped her make peace with her demons—and with a movie that might have tanked her career. Here, in an interview conducted shortly before the book's release, Rebello speaks to Playboy about these transformations—the movie's, Duke's and, as he wrote the book, his own.

PLAYBOY: At then end of Dolls! Dolls! Dolls! you touch upon Patty Duke's advocacy for queer communities. Why do you think it became such a passion for her?

REBELLO: I think that she understood what it was like to be the other—although that isn't always the open sesame to being kind or being an advocate. Queer people are everywhere, and lots and lots and lots are in show business. But I hear all the time people who've been in the business forever being absolutely idiotic and disgusting about queer people and transgender people and the whole gamut.

Patty, I think, really got it. She had been so battered by her own childhood, her own parents. She was exploited and damaged and commodified by the Rosses, who managed her, quote unquote. She was basically a house mule for them. It's why Patty and Judy Garland, in that brief time that Judy Garland was on the movie, got so intensely close. Both those women had a real appreciation for what it's like to be misjudged, laughed at, misunderstood, to have this freakish talent that most of the world merely exploited. Both of them, as children, were being force-fed drugs—one by her studio, the other by her so-called protectors.

PLAYBOY: So how did that background help her become an ally?

REBELLO: Valley of the Dolls strangely was an eye-opening experience for Patty Duke as she started to see it with gay audiences. For years, she would not talk about the movie at all. I completely understand why: When they're showing your award-clip reel, that's not necessarily one you want to include. But there's an entire population of people—of outcasts—who got the humor, who loved the outlandish costumes, the wig-upon-wig-upon-wig of it, the excess, the booze and drug aspects.

And so when she experienced that movie with gay audiences in San Francisco, in New York, in Chicago, Patty got the edge and the laughter and the sarcasm, but she also got these waves of love coming her way. Neely O'Hara was like an emblem for gay people. Lots of lesbian kids and grownups tell me all the time about how Neely is an inspiration because she takes no shit from anybody. She brings everything crashing down around her head, but she's basically a decent kid who got messed up along the way. I think you can understand that whether you're straight, gay, bi, whatever: Neely says what's on her mind.

So Patty tuned in. She found a source of love. She found a way to reconcile the movie that was supposed to put her on the map and did—but not the right map. Suddenly it became something that she could come to terms with. It's kind of a double whammy, because it not only reached this enormous worldwide audience and made a fortune, but it was ridiculed—so there was that. But then it found this other audience that for years and years kept Patty laughing at herself in the best possible way. Isn't the point of our lives to get deeper, to get kinder, to get more empathic? I think she did.

PLAYBOY: She also became an advocate for people living with mental illness and addiction.

REBELLO: I think this movie, strangely, helped her in that process. She found that she had gone through so much hell, and lived through it, and survived it, that she now wanted to tell other people that they could, too. Like many recovering addicts, she never made it seem like any day was a snap for her to get through, but that every day was a

Sharon Tate, right, received advice from castmate Duke on ways to respond to journalists without badmouthing *Valley of the Dolls*.

There's an entire population of people who got the humor, who loved the outlandish costumes, the wig-upon-wig-upon-wig of it.

struggle, and that every day is a struggle for everyone we know, in one way or another. She kept crisscrossing the country, speaking to people one-on-one. She was tireless, and she did it on her own dime. What a great way to use your gift and talent, bringing insight and heart and empathy and joy and understanding to people. I can't think of a better thing than any actor can do—to say thank you to someone by telling them they're worth talking to.

So my hat is off to Patty Duke, and I didn't necessarily start that way. I think I learned a thing or two on this journey.

PLAYBOY: Did the book originally have a different tone?

REBELLO: Three years ago my agent asked me why I wasn't writing another book. I said, "Well, I'm tired of coming up with serious ideas I really love that no one wants to publish." And I said, "Fuck it, I'm going to come up with something that I think I'll have fun with." But instead of just having a rip-roaring time, which is what I expected, I got caught up in it. Let's say you and I watch Valley of the Dolls in the theater; I'd be laughing hysterically, but it's tougher for me now to watch Patty, for example. She's still wildly over the top, but the laugh is coming from a different place. Honestly, sometimes it catches in my throat.

PLAYBOY: There's a quote in the excerpt in which Duke talks about her preparation for the role: "I went to bars and watched confused, tormented people full of self-pity and wondered how they got to be that way." What if the movie had been made in that spirit? Would it have endured as a serious look at sexism, addiction and mental illness?

REBELLO: You have to remember that Darryl Zanuck, who was still basically running the studio at that time, had made really important, socially relevant movies like Gentleman's Agreement, which dealt with antisemitism, and The Snake Pit, which dealt with mental illness in women. His vision for Valley of the Dolls was that it could be that: It could be an important look at opioids, way before we all knew about them; about women having no financial agency, no control over their careers, no place in the world without a man.

The Dolls screenplay never got there, and they never got a director who was willing to go there. But people forget that it was a risk to write that book, to make that movie and to be in that movie. The way it turned out—I mean, it's not irrelevant, but what some of the people making that movie were trying to do was noble. That's one of the reasons I wanted to write the book. There's an important story to tell.

Duke, left, preparing to shoot a scene for director Mark Robson, middle, with whom her conflicts were legendary.

COMMANDING PRESENCE

Heidi Runeberg

Instagram **@heidiruneberg**

Tell us something interesting about yourself that people would not originally know about you: I have a stuffed pink pig named Piggy-Lee that I take with me wherever I go. I have a Harley Davidson, These are my two babies.

Where are you originally from? I'm from Finland.

Which three words describe you the best: Wild, Loyal, and Kind.

Who is your celebrity crush? Don't really have one. I like Robert Redford, and I liked Steve McQueen (old movies are my thing).

Describe your perfect man: A man has to be hard, soft, and loyal.

What inspires you? Someone who encourages me to pursue my dreams and believes in me.

What do you do for fun? I do like a good party as much as a good movie on my couch with some popcorn and someone special.

What's the most cringeworthy pickup line you've ever gotten? The worst must be. I know what you want when you see me, so are we going to my Place or Yours?.

What do you love to do? Love reading.

What attracts you to a man? First, what I see in a man is his smile and his shoes.

What's a personal philosophy or belief that keeps you motivated, and do you have a favorite film that inspires or reflects that mindset? I believe that one can do whatever one likes in the world if your belief is strong enough. Best film caged.

What is your favorite music? Metal music.

What is your favorite film? The Godfather.

Favorite food? All kinds of seafood.

What is the craziest thing you have ever done? One crazy thing I have done is hiking through Finland in the middle of the night.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned in your career as a model? Be yourself; everyone else is taken.

Tell us a bit about your most embarrassing moment. Too many, pushing an Unknown Man in A wheelchair Around The City, Red in my face until he said, "I live here, Thank You, and then he stood up, took his wheelchair, and went into the house. I had helped a Conman who begs for money on the street.

What are you most looking forward to doing this year? Traveling to Paris, USA, Or the UK.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? I have always been helping rescue animals and hope to do it even more.

Are there new projects or events that you're working on, and could you tell us a bit about them? Hope to show my art (I'm A painter with my own gallery) in new galleries and work a bit more with art.

Lastly, what is your life motto? Or a quote that means a lot to you? Believe you can, and you are halfway there.

A CANNABIS SKEPTIC'S GUIDE TO CBD

COURTESY **IRA_EVVA**

One of Playboy's go-to cannabis experts sifts through the over-crowded **CBD market**

I've been smoking weed every day for more than a decade to manage anxiety and depression. Plus, I love the feeling. There's no greater relief than your first inhale of great-tasting bud and the giggly relaxation that follows. So when CBD came on the scene, I was skeptical from the get-go.

What do you mean this is "high-less" cannabis? Wasn't the high the point and the medical benefits a lucky bonus? But in the age of COVID-19, when the whole world mirrors my sweat-soaked anxiety dreams, I figure it's finally time to give CBD a shot. After all, "weed lite's" most popular use is for stress, so maybe it could help us all stop clenching our jaws and imagining the end of days.

Not all CBD products are created equal, but there are a few helpful things you can do while seeking the good stuff. As you explore, remember that the CBD experience is subtler than a difficult-t0-ignore THC high.

"This is definitely hard for people to wrap their heads around—especially THC consumers who typically equate cannabis with an immediate 'feeling,'" Degelis "Dege" Tufts, CEO and co-founder of TribeTokes, tells me when I express my CBD skepticism. "An analogy I use to help people understand better is that you can't always 'feel' Advil; you just feel generally better." I'm intrigued; anything to help me cope with this new dystopian reality.

If you're intrigued as well, consider following these five steps toward CBD mastery.

1. Investigate third-party testing.

"If you've ever spoken to someone who says CBD oil doesn't affect them, it's because they probably didn't have quality CBD oil," says Dr. Philip Blair, medical director of CBD brand Elixinol. He advises folks to check if their CBD has been tested by a third-party lab for such things as potency, pesticides, residual solvents and terpene profiles to help determine the quality of the product. Tufts of TribeTokes notes that products should have a QR code on the label that you can scan to read these results.

Kymberly "KymB" Byrnes, chief marketing officer and co-founder of TribeTokes, suggests you google the tests to ensure they're from an accredited lab. "We always say, if they can't answer your questions, you shouldn't be buying from them," she says.

So if a brand ignores your request for lab results—or your queries about, for example, where the plants are grown—it's likely not making high-quality stuff. Tufts reminds Playboy that hemp CBD brands are not required to lab-test their products, but the industry insists on "self-regulation" that provides consumers with the transparent and clean products they deserve.

2. Scan the ingredients.

Cannabis-oil labels can appear to be filled with jargon if you don't know what you're looking at. Full spectrum, broad spectrum, isolate? Hemp-derived, cannabis-rich, phytocannabinoid…. What does any of this stuff even mean?

First, it's important to know that CBD can be sourced from either the hemp plant, which is legal around the country, or the marijuana plant, which is legal in certain states for adult and/or medical use. The main legal difference between the two is hemp has less than 0.3 percent THC (the federal limit) and marijuana has more. Otherwise, all the experts and entrepreneurs I spoke to said the difference in experience between hemp- and marijuana-derived CBD is minimal, and adding more THC into one's routine will be a matter of preference and access.

Why does this matter? Basically, experts like Blair believe the medical benefits of cannabis are dependent on much more than CBD or THC; they're a combination of the plant's 400-plus compounds, including various cannabinoids, terpenes, sugars and flavonoids. This theory is known as the "entourage effect."

When searching for the most effective medicine, it's best to opt for "full spectrum" products if they're derived from hemp—meaning none of the plant's compounds have been removed, so they can all work together in their optimal, synergetic way. Unless, says Tufts, you're drug-tested regularly; then your best bet is a CBD-isolate product, because it won't show up on a drug screening. Just keep in mind that you might need to take a higher dose for the full effect.

From there, you'll want to read the label for a few other key points: Is it organic? If it truly is, it should have the USDA Organic certification seal on it. If it's an ingestible CBD oil, you'll also want to check what kind of carrier oils are used. MCT oil (most commonly from coconut oil) and hemp-seed oil are popular and desirable choices. If you're looking for an organic product, make sure these oils are organic as well.

3. Check the dose.

Besides scanning the label for quality, check for quantity—as in,

how many milligrams does this product contain? CBD-oil labels can be tricky to read when it comes to dose. But most often, the listed milligrams, such as 700 or 1,000, are for the entire bottle, not a single serving size. And what is a decent serving size? That's kind of a mystery that takes a bit of personal trial and error to figure out. Blair recommends folks start with around 15 milligrams twice a day and see how they feel. He adds that good dosages are 30 milligrams a day for stress, 60 milligrams for immune disorders and as much as 180 milligrams for pain.

"I have a friend who takes 15 milligrams for anxiety and 30 for sleep. That's her cocktail. But mine is different," says Byrnes. "I take 50 to 70 milligrams for sleep. For anxiety I like to mix CBD and THC. Things like age, weight, underlying conditions and altitude can all make a difference. Research and experimenting are your best bet."

It can be an expensive hobby, but she's right: Experimenting with different doses and ratios of CBD to THC is the ideal way to find something that works for you. And remember: If you're shopping for CBD oil, make sure each serving size is at least 10 to 20 milligrams or you won't be able to reach effective doses without consuming half the bottle in one go.

4. Dose regularly.

Unlike ingesting a THC edible, whose noticeable effects emerge an hour or so later, CBD is more of a long game when it comes to wellness enhancement, and folks report the most benefits when they take it daily. Especially in these taxing, unprecedented times, you'll likely get more stress relief if you take a reasonable dose two or three times a day rather than one big dose when you're freaking out. The effects may not be immediately noticeable, but when you look back at the week you'll likely realize it was a lot calmer and more manageable than the weeks before.

"Do you take a vitamin twice a week and expect it to make a difference?" asks Byrnes. "CBD should be integrated into your everyday lifestyle. Like an apple a day or yoga every damn day—CBD is the same."

There are many theories to explain this. "Regular dosing creates subtle changes in metabolism and epigenetics and regulates the immune system," says Blair. Tufts points to Harvard Medical School's hypothesis that chronic inflammation is the "unifying theory of disease," emphasizing CBD's anti-inflammatory properties as its mechanism for promoting relief from a wide array of conditions. Regardless of how it works, staying dosed up definitely seems to help people the most, whether they're using it for stress, pain or other conditions.

5. Keep track and adjust.

If you're a regular high THC-cannabis consumer like me and are struggling to figure out CBD's effects, start a journal. By keeping track of the dose and product, as well as your mood and symptoms, you can zero in on what—if anything—CBD is doing for you and make necessary adjustments.

"Keeping a journal is valuable because of the subtle changes you may not notice," explains Blair. "Many people often feel there are no improvements, until they stop; then they realize many things are happening."

CBD isn't a quick fix, but it can be a natural antidote to stress, sleeplessness and more serious conditions. And if there were ever a time to try weed lite, it's probably now.

"CBD should be integrated into your everyday lifestyle. Like an apple a day or yoga every damn day—CBD is the same."

on a fashion HIGH

COURTESY **GEORGE CHINSEE/WWD/SHUTTERSTOCK**

The ever-growing legalization of cannabis is blazing a new trend in the style industry

BY **ALLIE VOLPE**

Not long ago, cannabis fashion was limited to pot-leaf-emblazoned hoodies and “Bud”-adorned belt buckles. During the age of prohibition, when virtually all aspects of the cannabis industry operated in the shadows, luxury weed goods took a back seat to activism, science and policy change. Slowly, as one state after another legalized the herb for medical and adult use—currently, pot is legal in some capacity in 33 states—the stigma around consumption decreased and cannabis emerged as both a lifestyle and a lifestyle product.

The legal cannabis industry is expected to bring in $17 billion in overall sales this year, according to cannabis insights firm New Frontier Data—and a maturing industry breeds expansion into other markets. Labels including Edie Parker Flower, Mister Green and Sundae School, plus outlets such as Barneys’ high-end Beverly Hills head shop the High End, bring luxury cannabis product lines to lifestyle-minded consumers, with a focus on aesthetics and function. By redefining how a head shop looks, and the quality of products it sells, these brands are making weed fashionable.

Pot’s foray into fashion follows its rebranding from an illicit substance to a way of life. Drawing on its long-standing connection to the wellness industry—and its well-documented health benefits—brands and consumers have capitalized on the plant’s ability to impact mood and experiences, broadening its usership. Companies like Dosist and LucidMood market their strains and vapes based on the desired effect. CBD has trickled into beauty products, supplements and beverages, and chefs are incorporating cannabis into their cuisines.

“This whole legal world allows for more products and more communication around products—that it’s not only killer flower that people want,” says Lisa Gabor, who leads the newly launched cannabis division of New York communications firm BPCM.

Like luxury watches, jewelry and cars, cannabis fashion accessories marry function and aesthetics. After Edie Parker, the handbag brand whose clutches are prized among Hollywood red-carpet walkers, launched its home goods collection in 2016, founder and creative director Brett Heyman sought to put a fashionable spin on smoking paraphernalia. The Flower line, introduced in May 2019, brings the brand’s signature acrylic and hand-blown-glass materials to tabletop lighters, glass pipes, rolling trays and other practical accoutrements.

“Our products, whether it’s bags or home items, are never really that utilitarian,” Heyman says. “They have function, of course, but they’re really art pieces that you carry around or display on your table, and we wanted to look at smoking and stash accessories in the same way.”

Which isn’t to say Heyman wasn’t met with confusion as she developed the collection. “The roadblock was people saying, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, you make those expensive bags with people’s names on them and now you’re making cannabis accessories,’” she says.

While views around cannabis have shifted considerably in the United States—two thirds of Americans now support legalization—some still perceive it as taboo. But according to Gabor, when any industry intersects with another, labels can breed confidence in their consumers by maintaining brand integrity.

> *"The roadblock was people saying, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, you make those expensive bags with people’s names on them and now you’re making cannabis accessories."*

Flower
by
EDIE PARKER
by
EDIE PARKER
Flower
by
EDIE PARKER

“Years ago, when fashion brands started getting into the beauty arena, it was considered odd or weird,” she says. “Then you saw how Chanel translated the concept of what Chanel stood for in fashion and quality and thoughtfulness into a beauty line with the same sensibilities. In the same way, cannabis is becoming a lifestyle product.”

To Heyman, the luxury-cannabis consumer doesn’t fit one mold. While longtime weed fans may have yearned for accessories and clothes from fashion brands, high-end products also usher more lifestyle-minded consumers into pot appreciation: Those who consume for health and wellness purposes may want to experiment with high-end weed accessories. Newer consumers “can now discover cannabis and find something beautiful to put it in,” Heyman says, in the same way people have sought out aesthetically pleasing bar-cart fixings.

As pot continues to converge with other aspects of life—fashion, sexual pleasure, even wine—more brands will come into the fold, naturally. This diversification allows each company to focus on areas where it excels, whether that’s handbags or smokewear.

“Cannabis is for our girl,” Heyman says. “It’s for the girl who wants to buy a bag that’s a little more expensive because it’s handmade by skilled artisans and it’s a modern heirloom, and she’s also curious about cannabis. And I can speak to her. I think as an industry grows, everybody gets to participate and you don’t have to solve everybody’s needs. One cannabis brand doesn’t have to be for everybody.”

CHASITY SAMONE
RETHINKS THE MAKEOVER

WRITTEN BY
CHASITY SAMONE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ADRIENNE RAQUEL

Our February 2020 Playmate shows that DIY beauty and wellness (and a glass or two of wine) can help us all stay grounded

When I decided to start modeling, I moved to New York in search of a place where I belonged. I didn't know what type of model I should be, since modeling has specific lanes you can land in—fashion, commercial, swimsuit, beauty. I kept working shoots, and the beauty community eventually found me. I didn't know I could be a beauty model until they told me.

The beauty industry accepted me from the beginning, and I've met so many amazing people through it. Coloured Raine—founded by Loraine Dowdy, a black woman—was one of the first beauty companies to gave me opportunities. There was also AJ Crimson, and I worked with Jeffree Star for many years. They helped make me who I am today.

I deeply admire the beauty industry for the strides it has made in promoting all types of beauty. We have to work hard to make a name for ourselves—if you don't run with what's new and do what needs to be done, you'll just get left behind—but the groundbreaking people I work with have global followings. I feel we've made good progress even though we still have a long way to go. There are also different levels to representation: Diverse models are an important step, but we should also be represented behind the scenes—as founders and makeup artists and more.

Being quarantined, you'd think beauty would be less important since people aren't out and about—but that assumes you get dolled up only for others. I was just telling my sister, who had broken a nail and was upset about it, that beauty and all the self-care it can bring should be seen as a mental health issue. When I look good, I feel good. If I'm not looking on-point, then I'll probably be feeling a little off that day. How you perceive your beauty affects your energy.

Now that we're without our usual beauty services—we can't go to the nail salon, we can't go to the beauty shop—it's extra important to be resourceful. Allow yourself to experiment; look on YouTube and see what you can do for yourself. And there's always something on Amazon you can buy to perk yourself up. I want to bring some cheer to my day-to-day, so I've been messing with colors and glitter. For my Instagram Live tutorial with Playboy I'll likely be using my favorite palettes to try out a spring look.

You don't always have control over what's happening around you, but you can control yourself and focus on your own sanity. That's what my passion for beauty does for me.

Chasity's Self-care Tips

See how to be your best self in quarantine

1. SKIN CARE
Do some research and find a combo that helps you end the day feeling fresh. Every evening I apply cleanser, rosewater toner, moisturizer and avocado eye cream.

2. YOGA, PRAYER OR MEDITATION
I love this because it requires close to no equipment and can be done anywhere.

3. CONNECTING WITH LOVED ONES
Staying in touch can keep you grounded. I have 10 brothers and sisters, so our FaceTime is pretty lit.

4. PLANNING
Give yourself something to look forward to when social distancing comes to an end. The first thing I'm going to do is plan a trip to Tulum.

5. INDULGING
A glass of wine cannot be underestimated.

PLAYMATE ASHLEY MATTINGLY:
A REMEMBRANCE

WRITTEN BY
THE PLAYBOY EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES

With sadness and great fondness, Playboy remembers the spry Texas native who lit up our March 2011 issue

Strength and Beauty. That was the title, both apt and prophetic, of Ashley Mattingly's March 2011 Playmate pictorial. The opening spread shows her kickboxing, doing an impressive leg press (with pink barbell weights, no less) and facing the camera, chin up, mouth set, eyes confronting the viewer with quiet confidence—and a hint of fierceness.

Last week, the world lost Ashley. Members of her family told People that "our dear sister with a larger-than-life personality took her own life." Ashley had been open about her struggles with addiction and the trauma of abuse on her Instagram account, which also includes images of the radiant Texan on horseback, on a yacht and feeding a golden retriever puppy she adopted last year. It's clear that the joie de vivre she expressed in her pictorial—"I'm really good at having fun!"—glowed from within even as she fought her demons.

"She was adventurous. She was blunt. She was a rebel with a big heart," says Carrie Stevens, our June 1997 Playmate and a close friend of Ashley's.

Born in Dallas on September 10, 1986, Ashley was a shy kid who came out of her shell when she discovered track and cross-country running in high school. She moved to Los Angeles four years before we published her pictorial and immediately took to the city's glamorous side. "I adore slipping on a Versace dress and a pair of Jimmy Choos and going to dinner at Madeo, which is so much fun and such a scene," she told us. "The paparazzi are always out front!"

There was no missing Ashley around southern California's dining establishments—especially when she brought a certain friend along. p"Ashley used to have a Persian cat that she took everywhere with her," Carrie tells Playboy. "She even brought the cat to restaurants."

Ashley's mischievous spirit shines through in one of Carrie's favorite memories of their friendship. p"I was spending a weekend with Ashley when she lived in Laguna Beach," she says. "She had these neighbors—three guys that lived in the apartment next to hers. She told me they never locked their door so we went in and the place was a pig sty. We pranked them by making all their beds and cleaning while they were out. We were laughing so hard—then one of them came home and we hid in the other room giggling until he busted us. We had silly fun together."

On her Data Sheet, Ashley voiced her idea of sexy: "A woman who holds herself well, is impeccably classy and is not judgmental of others." In hindsight, the line could double as a description of Ashley herself.

We send our very best to the Mattingly family. Ashley, strong and beautiful, will live on in our pages and in our hearts.

If you have struggled with addiction, survived abuse or thought about taking your life, we urge you to consider using the following resources:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255), suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Crisis Text Line: text STRENGTH to 741-741
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233, thehotline.org
SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration) National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)

Unapologetically herself

Klaudia Ménesi

Instagram **@itsbeenieboo**

Photography by Mike Cohen | @mikecohenphotos

Tell us about the moment you found out you would be featured in the magazine. What was your initial reaction? I was so happy. I stream video games and I was on a live broadcast. It may sound childish, but I cried. For me, being in the magazine is a huge professional recognition.

Can you share your favorite shot or spread from the magazine and why it holds special significance for you? The picture of me in a green bikini (portrait). I showed my mother the raw pictures and it was this picture of me made her start crying and say "This is so much you, baby".

Are there any particular hobbies or interests outside of your influencer work that you're passionate about? Video games. I can call myself lucky that my job is my hobby. It was very important to me to be able to cultivate a friendly relationship with my viewers, not just to know who I am from a picture, but to actually get to know them. I don't just stream games, I also have just chatting. I get to know a lot of my viewers and it's nice to communicate with them so intimately. They're like my second family.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? I would like to write books. Children's books that help children with difficulties "read". e.g. a storybook in Braille for deaf children. I am a woman, maybe I will open a beauty salon or start a cosmetics brand. I would like to create something lasting.

What's your secret to feeling sexy and confident in front of the camera? I give myself. I think self-confidence comes from feeling good in your own skin and people noticing that. Don't get me wrong, I get nervous a lot during photoshoots. Whether I am good enough, or not, am I chubby, or ugly? But in the end, I'm always happy because so many people see beauty with so many different eyes.

If you could spend a day doing anything you wanted, what would your ideal day look like? I would sleep all day. I am a terrible sleeper. I think too much instead of sleeping and it would be so nice to sleep for a day.

Would you rather be loved, respected, or admired? All three. One doesn't work without the other. As much as I love someone, they should love me as much, and so on.I myself am more of an overly loving and emotional person.

Are you a city traveler or nature explorer? Both. It depends on the place. But a city has its beauty just as much as a forest or nature. You have to see the beauty in everything.

What's on your travel bucket list? I want to see every part of the world. I don't want to end up in a situation where I can't say " I have lived enough".

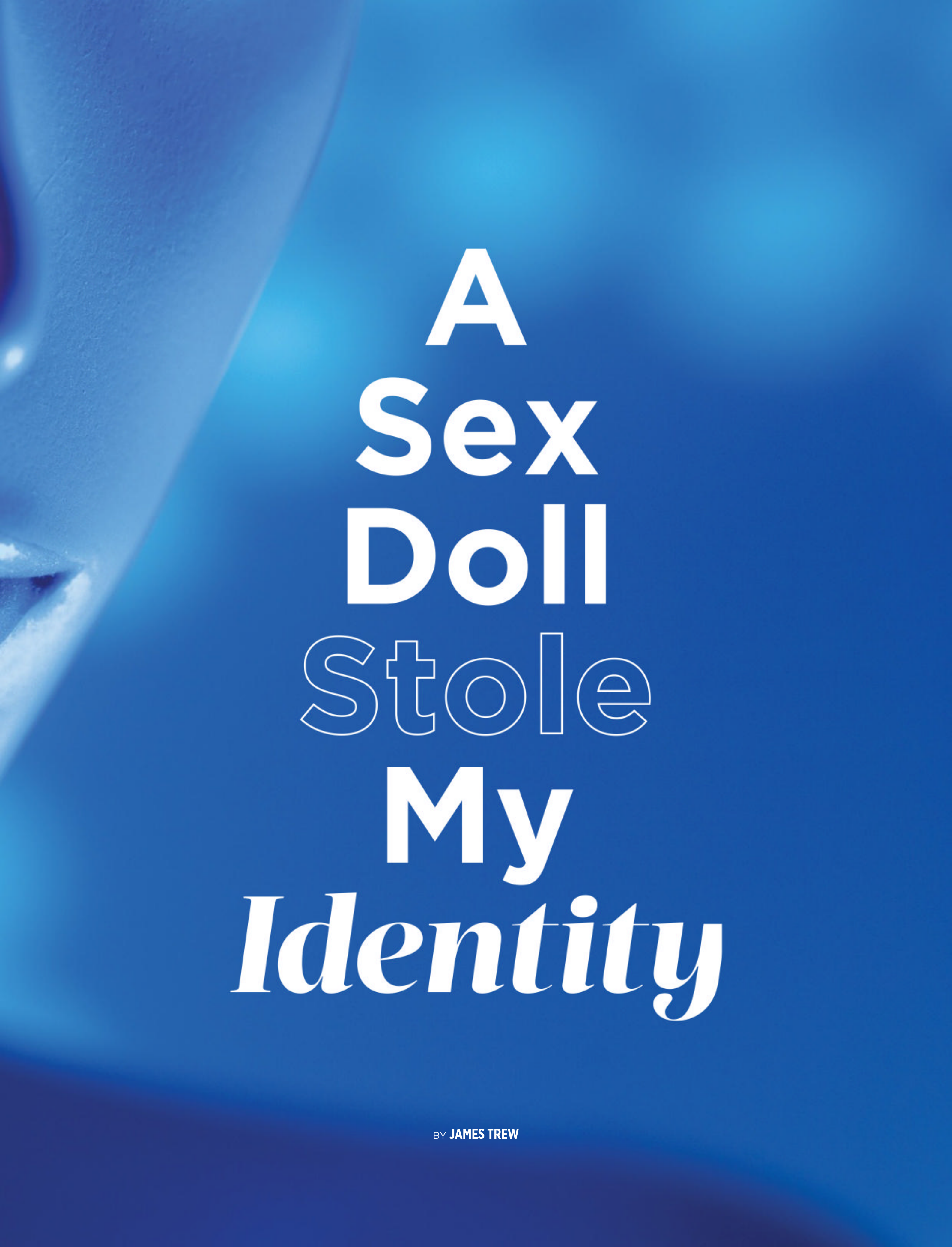
What is the most memorable date you've ever had? On my birthday, a suitor showed up at my house with a big bouquet of flowers. He drove 2000km to be with me. It meant a lot to me. I have beautiful memories of every relationship I've had, even if it ended badly. There was a beautiful moment there once, and I try to focus on the good.

What makes you the ultimate partner to have? I am understanding, and caring. I can cook, quite well. And I am a woman in a relationship. This is important because in today's world, women forget to stay WOMAN and the man stay MAN.

What is your favorite part of your body and why? My eyes and my face. I am Slavic and because of that, my face has a bit more character. I really like it. And the shem is the mirror of the soul. Tell me.What it says about me when you look into my eyes. A lot of young women look up to you.

What advice would you give them on pursuing their own dreams? There is no limit that you cannot overcome and you will cross it alone. Never give up even. When everyone else is against you. People and opinions come and go. But I say be the kind of person that when you look in the mirror you are proud.

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, do you have any last words to our readers and where can they find you? On my Instagram @itsbeenieboo or Twitch @itsbeenieboo.



A Sex Doll Stole My *Identity*

BY **JAMES TREW**

Forget Deepfakes: A sex-toy company in Asia is “borrowing” the likenesses of Instagram influencers—without their consent—to create best-selling dolls

Yael Cohen is five-seven with chestnut hair and a Mediterranean complexion. She’s also five-four, blonde and with soft white skin. Sometimes she’s five-11, dark-haired and black. Your very own Yael is available to order, in any configuration you like, as long as you have the money.

Only one of those combinations describes the living, breathing Yael Cohen—a popular Instagrammer from Israel. Now 23 years old, she just completed four years of mandatory military service, during which she worked as a software engineer. Like many people her age, Cohen enjoys posting attractive pictures of herself on Instagram. She’s worked hard to build a following and enjoys interacting with her fans. As Cohen tells it, she decided to take ownership of her image and her right to feel sexy. This is the internet, of course, so some sexual objectification is unavoidable, but few could have predicted how literal that would be for Cohen.

About a year ago, Cohen received a message from one of her followers. It linked to a forum about sex dolls. When she clicked it, she was met with an eerily familiar face: hers. The thread was started by the doll’s maker, and it described a new “model” of head coming soon; this one was a rough prototype. Cohen brushed it off as a coincidence.

Months later, she received another DM. This time there was no mistaking it—the link showed the final doll. Although its likeness to Cohen is subjective, its inspiration is not. It shares her first name and in some pictures sports an ombré wig similar to one Cohen sometimes uses in her posts. In case there was any doubt, the doll’s creator proudly explained, “Yael is inspired by this beautiful lady,” with links to several of Cohen’s Instagram pictures. “How will she satisfy your great fantasy?” he asked. The forum users subsequently explained just how.

The discovery sent Cohen into a spin. Being a woman online already comes with harsh realities, something Cohen and anyone else who identifies as female knows all too well. Being popular on Instagram only raises the stakes—but someone using your face to make a sex doll, with a choice of bodies and a functioning vagina, isn’t usually one of them.

“I’m confident with my own body, and I also like to share my thoughts, my points of view, my beliefs,” Cohen tells Playboy. “But it’s something that nobody teaches you how to react to. After the first shock, I started feeling some complex feelings.”

“Complex” is likely an understatement. It’s a big leap from typical entitled Instagram comments about how fuckable you are to discovering a physical clone that is, well, actually fuckable.

In the past few years, what it means to be objectified online has shifted dramatically, with the standards for exploitation being dismantled and rebuilt in incomprehensible ways.

Around the end of 2017, Deepfakes emerged. These AI-generated videos could superimpose anyone’s face over anyone else’s. Needless to say, the technology soon found a spiritual home in porn. Before long, subreddits spilled over with fake Emma Watson and Gal Gadot videos. Look-alike porn actors or run-of-the-mill Photoshops suddenly seemed quaint; you could simply feed an app some images and humiliate women that way instead. In fact, DeepNude, an app that spat out naked images with any face you fed it, served up only female bodies.

Deepfakes may be realistic, but they’re virtual. They may live online forever, but they’ll soon be replaced with the next “it’s just a bit of fun” attack on female privacy. While the personal impact of Deepfakes is not to be dismissed, they’re still a visual extension of the male fantasy—a turn-on that you must eventually turn off.

Not only was her **likeness** taken, but the doll has her name and is directly linked to her. It has **built-in marketing,** all for the sweet price of **zero dollars.**

Cohen knows that anyone who buys “Yael” can do whatever they want to her, whenever they want, and there’s no DMCA takedown service to stop it. “If I wanted to have nudes, I would have nudes,” she says. “If I wanted to have a sex doll, I would have a sex doll. They took my choice away. It’s sort of forcing me to show my body naked.”

Owners of these dolls frequently share their exploits on the forums. Sexual activity is usually only implied, bar the odd discussion about the merits of a built-in versus a removable vagina or about accurate anus placement. The bulk of what owners share is painfully pedestrian. Photosets depict Yael shopping or maybe enjoying a day in the garden. Sometimes these innocent scenarios seem more invasive—as though someone took a piece of Cohen’s soul and forced her to live with them.

Sex dolls made in the likeness of real people aren’t new. The difference here is that Cohen isn’t a porn star, she was never approached by the company, she never gave her consent, and she receives precisely nothing from any sales.

Jade Stanley, founder of the U.K.-based sexdollofficial.com, specializes in bespoke creations but also offers licensed porn-star dolls. “I’m actually the only company in the world that offers the service that I do,” she says. “I know you’ve got RealDoll in the States and everything, but they still do not do what I do. I can replicate anything.”

Each time someone buys one of Stanley’s licensed dolls, the performer can expect around $500 (though her dolls are more expensive than those of the company that makes “Yael”). Cohen’s reaction to this is as you’d expect: “Wow, that means if I actually had that, I would be very rich right now.” She’d noted that “Yael” had been in the company’s best-seller spot for weeks. But it isn’t the money that bothers her; it’s the loss of control. And when you’re trying to carve out a career based on your personal brand, control is everything.

Stanley also highlights a side of the business that rarely makes the headlines: “The majority of my [*bespoke*] customers are people who suffer with anxiety or loneliness issues. It’s probably one of the things that most shocked me about this business when I first got into it.”

Too often we think of the carnal side and forget that, ultimately, we’re all human (except the dolls). When Stanley tells me this, I reconsider the more innocent interactions I’ve seen on the forum. None of it seems malicious or evil—it’s almost sweet. The owners probably haven’t considered that somewhere the real Yael is feeling violated. But that doesn’t make it okay.

> The majority of my [bespoke] customers are people who suffer with **anxiety** or **loneliness issues.** It’s probably one of the things that most **shocked me** about this business.

Courtesy **Alex Raysikh**

> *“She’d have a very good claim under most states’ laws for violation of her rights to publicity. So this could be a multimillion-dollar case."*

When I tell Stanley about Cohen, she’s appalled, saying it’s not uncommon for individuals to ask for dolls based on real people, but usually it’s an amalgamation—Ariana Grande’s eyes, Kiera Knightley’s nose, that kind of thing. It’s like a modern-day version of Weird Science, where clients program their perfect woman into a computer and out pops Kelly LeBrock. But these are one-offs, not for mass production.

Adult performers have long endorsed specific body-part replicas too. You can buy Fleshlights cast from the private parts of dozens of adult performers. Misty Stone tells me she has all three of her orifices available for purchase—and a full doll made in her likeness. For her, it’s a lucrative second income.

“When I first started with Fleshlight, those checks were fucking amazing,” Stone says. “I get $12,000, $10,000, $6,000 here, $8,000 there. There are so many girls who have them, you know; you want to get your fans to buy yours. So you just promote, promote, promote on your social media, and you make good money back.”

Ironically, that point is not lost on Cohen. “I feel in some way I’m helping them sell it because it’s my name. People buy it because it’s me, because it’s attached to my photos.” Salt, meet wound. Not only was her likeness taken, but the doll has her name and is directly linked to her. It has built-in marketing, all for the sweet price of zero dollars.

Of course there’s a robust legal system in place to stop this, right? Well, no, not really. When Cohen first sought legal advice, a lawyer told her she simply wasn’t famous enough. Fortunately, it turns out even us regular folks do have rights.

“What most lawyers would instantly jump on here is what’s called ‘the right of publicity,’” says Jonathan Steinsapir, a partner at KWIKA law firm. He should know: He represented Kendall Jenner when Cutera cosmetics allegedly used images of her to promote its products without her permission.

According to Steinsapir, most U.S. states recognize a right of publicity. If any Yael dolls are sold in those states, Cohen would have a claim. One high-profile example of the right of publicity is when Taster’s Choice used a handsome male countenance on some of its labels. The plaintiff, Russell Christoff, was originally paid a trivial sum for a photo shoot with a clause stating that if his image was used in marketing, he’d be further compensated. Nestlé, owner of the Taster’s Choice brand at the time, used the image again, without telling him, and paid the price. The jury initially awarded Cristoff $15 million. The final sum he received is not known.

I don’t know about you, but a coffee container seems less of a personal invasion than an anatomically accurate sex doll in your likeness. Steinsapir agrees.

“If she has not consented to allow her image to be used for a sex doll, it’s just offensive,” he says. “She’d have a very good claim under most states’ laws for violation of her rights to publicity. It would also entitle her to punitive damages, which can multiply your actual damages by anywhere up to 10 times. So this could be a multimillion-dollar case.”

Unfortunately, the company that makes the Yael doll is based in China, where concepts of intellectual property are very different. Enforcing a U.S. judgment internationally is not impossible, but sometimes it might as well be. Still, the doll is sold in the U.S., so the potential is there.

Sometimes the most important judgment is one that hits a little closer to home. I ask Cohen what her mother thinks about all this. “It took me a couple of weeks to tell her,” she says. “I needed to find the perfect timing and the courage to do it.” When Cohen eventually took her aside, her mother was surprised but supportive. “Of course, she’d rather I stayed as a software engineer and not be on Instagram, but they love me for me.”

When I reach out to the company that makes the doll, it doesn’t immediately respond. I ask Cohen what one thing she would tell the company if she could.

“I honestly just want to know why,” she replies. “Why did you do that?”

We may never know the answer. Neither Stanley nor Stone, both women in this industry, had ever heard of something like this beyond trivial cases like a blow-up doll that was sorta-kinda based on Miley Cyrus. Even that was more of a knock-off Halloween costume than an actual likeness.

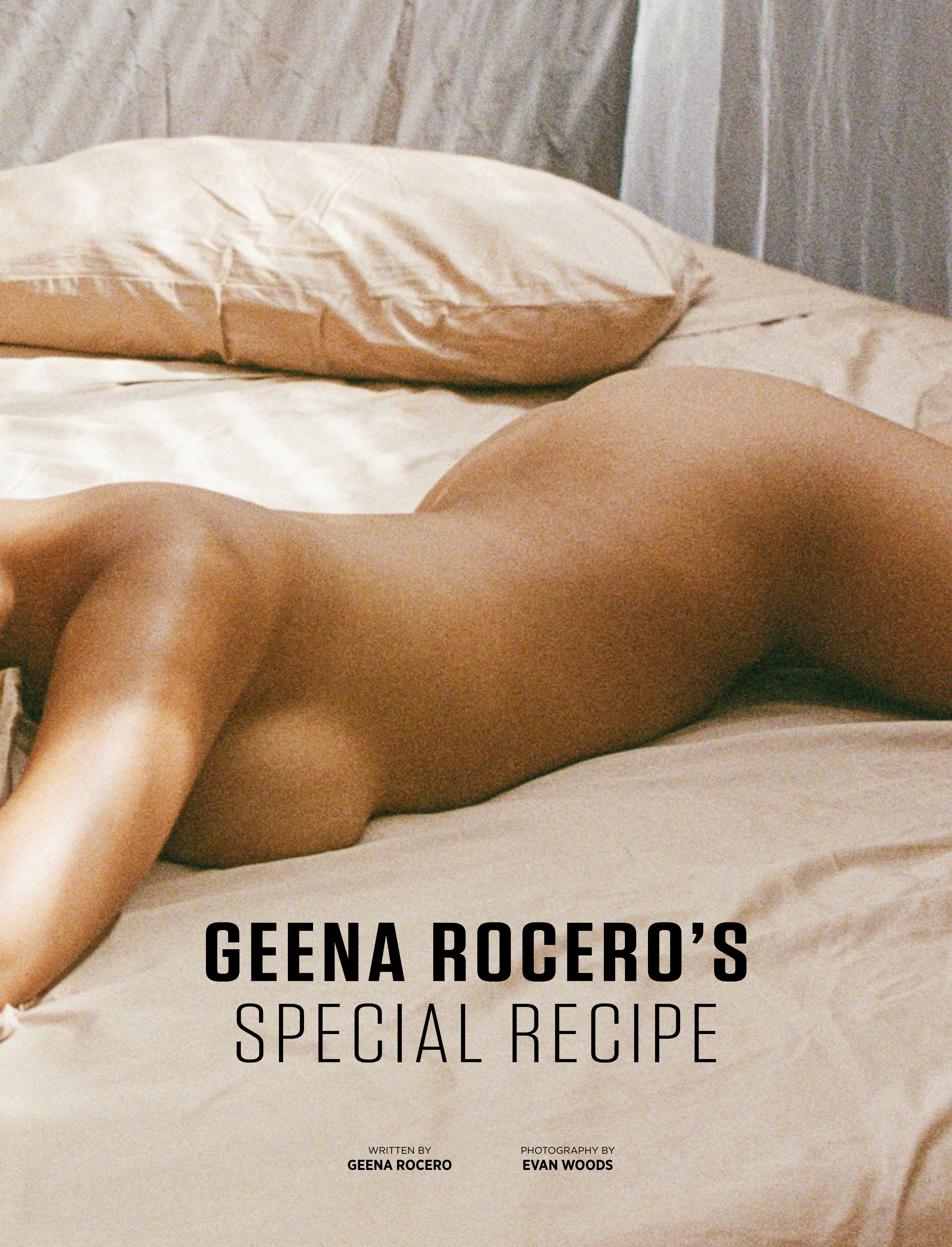
One thing’s for sure: This will happen again. The same manufacturer is already working on a doll based on actress and social media star Liza Soberano, which it flaunted on the same forum as it did “Yael.”

It’s hard to blame the customers. We don’t know their motivations, and many won’t ever know the doll they bought is based on a real person. And there will always be the victim blamers who say things like “Well, what did you expect? You’re a public-facing woman on the internet”—an outdated view that doesn’t seem to be going anywhere soon.

As for the company behind the doll? It changed the wording of its initial forum post once it caught wind that Cohen knew about it. She also suspects some of the defensive comments about the doll on her Instagram post were from employees. Who knows how many of the company’s dolls are based on unsuspecting women?

In the meantime, Cohen hopes to get back to her normal life, without the specter of her silicone sister looming over her.

“I just want to keep working on the things I love,” she says, “reach people and influence them, promoting my beliefs and ideas and hopefully making the world a better place.”



GEENA ROCERO'S
SPECIAL RECIPE

WRITTEN BY
GEENA ROCERO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
EVAN WOODS

Our August 2019 Playmate reflects on the cultural and personal redolence of the Philippines' national dish — and its surprising shelter-in-place usefulness

Chicken adobo is pretty much the most famous Filipino dish. We have 7,000 islands in the Philippines, and different islands have different ways of making it.

When I was growing up, my dad did most of the cooking (and the dishes and the laundry; he was the best stay-at-home dad). My mom was the breadwinner—a teacher for 22 years who always had a side hustle, like doing sales for various products. For a conservative culture like the one I grew up in, the roles were definitely reversed.

I moved to the United States at 17 and lived with my mom in San Francisco. My dad passed away before we left the Philippines, so my mom learned how to cook basically everything he'd cooked. Four years later, I moved to New York City by myself. The first month, a cold March in 2005, I was so homesick; I just wanted something homey and comfy. I remember phoning my mom to say, "I'm craving your cooking!" So she basically told me how to cook chicken adobo over the phone, and once I'd learned it I was like, That's how simple it is?

I'd never cooked anything in my life except boiling water for noodles or frying an egg. After that lesson from my mom, I started experimenting with omelets because you can mix and match so many different things. From the very beginning the concept was, What can I do that doesn't necessarily have to follow a strict recipe? As I moved forward, I realized it's just about understanding the base. Filipino cooking usually starts with sautéing garlic and onion, garlic and ginger or a combination of the three. Then you build it up with fish sauce, soy sauce, vinegar or even tomato sauce. As soon as I'd learned those basic ideas, I was like, You know what? I can do this!

I started sharing my chicken adobo with neighbors and friends. One or two drumsticks with white rice is so easy to cook, and I loved doing it. Cooking at home feels appropriate for this time, because you can make a lot so you'll have leftovers. And you have options, which is especially important now that most of us are sheltering in place. If you don't have one of the ingredients and can't go to the store, you just swap in something else.

Perhaps most famous Filipino restaurant in New York is a place called Jeepney. Filipinos living in the United States are, by many counts, the second largest population of Asian Americans (after the Chinese), but our food cultures just recently entered the mainstream conversation. In the last couple of years, Jeepney led the way in cooking unapologetic Filipino food and providing a cultural hub for young Filipino Americans.

I had my August 2019 Playmate party there. They created a life-sized print of my Centerfold and hung it at the front of the restaurant. It's home to me, obviously.

When the COVID-19 tragedy started happening last month, I reached out to the owner, who's a dear friend of mine, and asked what I could do to help. We created a fund-raising video to help her take care of her employees and sell merch. And I just saw that they're open for delivery now!

Chicken Adobo by Geena Rocero

INGREDIENTS

2	tablespoons coconut oil
6	cloves smashed garlic
½	medium red or white onion
10	pieces chicken (my favorite is dark meat — either drumsticks or thighs)
¾ cup	soy sauce
½ cup	vinegar (white, apple cider or coconut vinegar works)
½ cup	chicken broth or water
6 bay	leaves
Ground black pepper to taste (the more peppery the better)	
2	tablespoons lemon juice (I prefer fresh lemon)

STEPS

1. Heat coconut oil in a wok or large pan.
2. Sauté garlic and onion till brown.
3. Add chicken and brown on both sides.
4. Add soy sauce, vinegar, broth/water, bay leaves and pepper.
5. Simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes
6. Stir, then reduce heat to low and simmer another 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked.
7. Drizzle the lemon juice.
8. Serve with steamed white rice (sometimes I use coconut garlic rice).

This dish lasts in the fridge; I'd say it actually gets better over time as the marinade seeps in. (I sometimes eat it for days!) I also shred the chicken and add it to soup, salad or a wrap.

Shannon Ueberfluss

Instagram **@bass.angel.shannon**

Photography by Mike Cohen | @mikecohenphotos

Tell us about the moment you found out you would be featured in the magazine. What was your initial reaction? Oh, finding out I'd be featured in Playboy was an absolute dream come true moment! It's been a goal of mine since college, fueled by watching shows like The House Bunny, Girls Next Door, and even America's Next Top Model back in the day. I remember thinking, 'Wow, to be a model...that would be incredible.' Each year, I'd set that Playboy goal for myself, and finally achieving it felt surreal. When I got the news, I was ecstatic! Growing up, I wasn't the typical 'pretty girl' in high school; I was quite nerdy and often felt like I didn't fit in. The thought of becoming a model was so far-fetched then. This whole experience really proves that you should absolutely never give up on your dreams, no matter how improbable they might seem. I've accomplished every goal I've set for myself thus far in my life.

Can you share your favorite shot or spread from the magazine and why it holds special significance for you? As for my favorite shot or spread, it might surprise some people that it's not necessarily the most overtly sexy one. It's the image of me in the brown bikini, just emerging from the pool. There's a playful energy to it, and I have this little smirk in my eye – what I like to call my 'bedroom eyes that I really love. That particular shoot was part of an incredible content trip with other models abroad, and the entire experience was epic. Looking back, I know that if I hadn't taken that leap of faith and traveled alone to the Dominican Republic with Mike Cohen and the LSA Management Team, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. That trip really underscored for me that a huge part of modeling, and life in general, is about stepping outside your comfort zone. Sometimes, you just have to book that flight, even if you don't know everyone you'll be traveling with. So, that whole shoot, that entire trip, holds a really special significance for me.

Are there any particular hobbies or interests outside of your influencer work that you're passionate about? Absolutely! While I love connecting with people through my work, travel is truly my lifeblood. You could even call me 'Travel Barbie' I've explored 54 countries so far, and my ultimate goal is to experience every single one, the well-trodden paths and the more obscure corners of the globe. In fact, I'm speaking to you right now from the fascinating landscape of Egypt. Living abroad in Rome and Barcelona, and working for a travel company, really solidified my passion for immersing myself in different cultures and understanding the nuances of each city. It's about so much more than just seeing the sights; it's about learning, growing, and connecting with the world on a deeper level. Beyond that, I'm a huge fan of music festivals. If that counts as a hobby, then it's definitely one of my favorites! While you won't find me excelling at sports or on the dance floor, the energy and collective experience of a festival are something I find incredibly exhilarating. So, between venturing to new countries and soaking up the vibes at music festivals, that's where you'll usually find me when I'm not creating content.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? I'd love to be a part of more Playboy projects in the future. I really enjoy modeling, but I mostly do it as my side passion. I think I want to do more runway work because I've never been to a fashion show. I'd also love to start working on doing more travel content and branch out as an influencer.

What's your secret to feeling sexy and confident in front of the camera? That's a fun question! While there isn't one single magic trick, it's definitely a combination of things. For me, great hair is a huge confidence booster – there's something about big, beautiful hair that just makes you feel powerful. And you're right, sometimes with the right lighting and a touch of makeup, you already feel fantastic. A killer outfit that makes you feel amazing and a quick morning workout for that extra bit of energy definitely contribute too. Interestingly, it wasn't always this way. I was actually quite shy growing up, and college really helped me come out of my shell. Now, I'm a total social butterfly and feel completely comfortable in front of the camera. I think that transformation came from a few key things really investing in my skincare, making consistent workouts a priority, and pushing myself outside my comfort zone through solo travel

and meeting new people. Those experiences built a strong sense of self and helped me embrace who I am, which I think radiates as confidence and, yes, a little bit of sexiness in front of the lens.

If you could spend a day doing anything you wanted, what would your ideal day look like? Oh, I love this question! First, I would wake up and watch the sunrise doing yoga on the beach then go to the gym for some endorphins. Then I would hop on a plane to a new country. The airport and booking trips gives me endorphins. I always say that you can't be depressed if you always have a trip to look forward to. I know traveling every month isn't realistic for everyone, but I've been traveling every month since 2021 after I made a vow to take a small trip every month for the rest of my life. If I didn't travel on my ideal day, I think I would spend some time at a wildlife sanctuary or an animal shelter because I love animals. There's nothing like puppy yoga to boost your mood. Then I would end my day with a spa session, a face mask, a warm bubble bath, and a glass of champagne.

Would you rather be loved, respected or admired? That's such a thoughtful question, and it really makes you pause. While respect and admiration are certainly wonderful to receive, if I had to choose, I would also lean towards being loved. You can be respected for your achievements or admired from afar, but love carries a deeper connection, a sense of belonging, and genuine care. I believe that those loving relationships – with family, friends, and a partner are truly the foundation of a happy and fulfilling life. To be loved is to be seen, accepted, and cherished for who you are at your core, and that, to me, feels like the most precious gift.

Are you a city traveler or a nature explorer? That's a great question because I truly appreciate both worlds. You could definitely call me a cosmopolitan girl at heart Sex and the City resonates deeply with my love for vibrant city life, energy, culture, and yes, those fabulous restaurants and luxurious hotels. There's a certain thrill to that sophisticated urban experience. Barcelona, for example, completely stole my heart as a city to both live in and explore. However, the call of nature is also something I deeply enjoy. There's something so invigorating about snorkeling in crystal-clear waters and encountering incredible wildlife, or challenging myself with a beautiful hike. It offers a different kind of richness and perspective. So, while my roots are definitely in the city – and Miami is where I'm happily planted right now I love that contrast of being able to escape into nature and then return to the buzz of urban life. Perhaps it's the best of both worlds and maybe that balance will continue to evolve over time.

What's on your travel bucket list? To be honest, the list is never ending. My top pick would have to be Brazil. I want to go to Rio Carnivale or Florianópolis. I'd also love to finish off the rest of Europe. I've done 20 countries there so far. Seriously, I could go on for days to this question. Let's just say I want to visit all 197 countries.

What is the most memorable date you've ever had? Oh, there have been a few that really stand out! One that immediately comes to mind was incredibly bold having someone fly me to a completely different country for a first date and a spontaneous adventure. Talk about making an entrance! Another unforgettable experience was diving headfirst into the energy of a music festival with someone. For me, those kinds of dates are so telling. You really see how you connect when you're navigating new environments or the intensity of a festival together. It's like being thrown into the deep end, and you quickly discover if you're in sync. I thrive on spontaneity and new experiences, so anyone looking to date me should definitely be ready to keep things exciting and embrace the unexpected.

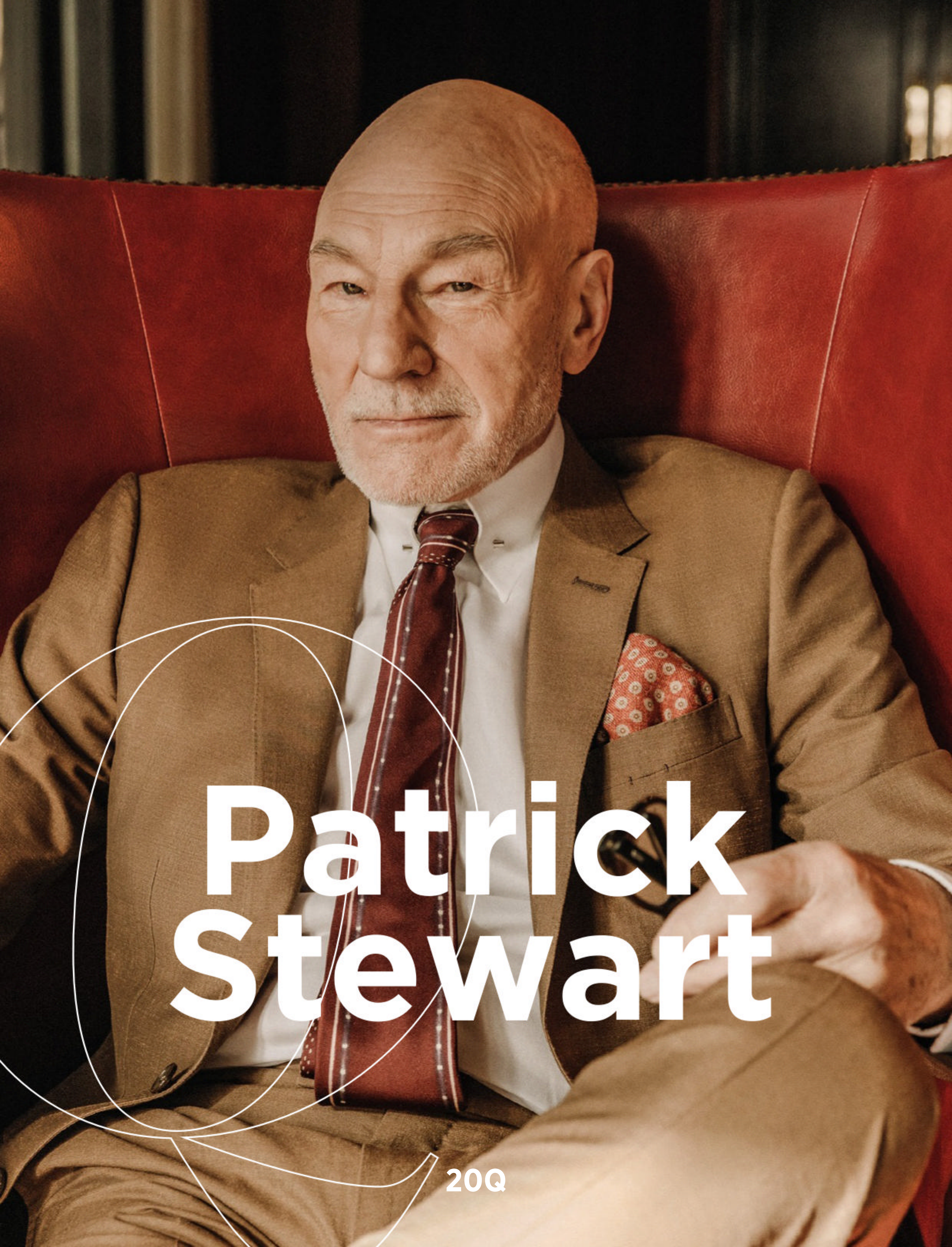
What makes you the ultimate partner to have? Well, life with me is certainly never dull. I bring a vibrant blend of adventure and cozy intimacy. Imagine spontaneous getaways and thrilling new experiences balanced with the comfort of movie nights and heartfelt cuddles.

Beyond that, I possess a genuine zest for life, a childlike wonder that keeps things fresh and exciting. I truly believe in nurturing that inner child and embracing joy, which translates into a playful spirit and a lighthearted approach to life. In a world that can often feel heavy, I offer unwavering positivity and a healthy dose of humor. While I embrace spontaneity and a bit of wildness, I also offer a grounded perspective. It's that perfect balance of fun and level-headedness that allows for both excitement and stability. And perhaps most importantly, loyalty is paramount to me. I'm the kind of friend who stands by you through thick and thin, and that unwavering loyalty extends deeply into a romantic partnership.

What is your favorite part of your body and why? That's a lovely question! For me, I've always appreciated my eyes. They feel like windows to the world, allowing me to take in the beauty around me, connect with others, and express a range of emotions without saying a word. Plus, they've witnessed so many incredible sunsets, vibrant cultures, and heartwarming moments during my travels. They hold a lot of stories, and I think that's pretty special. It's wonderful that you love your lips! They're such a unique and expressive feature.

A lot of young women look up to you, what advice would you give them on pursuing their own dreams? It's truly humbling to hear that. If there's one thing I've learned on my own journey, it's the power of knowing yourself deeply. Dig into what truly ignites your passion, what makes you feel alive and purposeful. Don't chase someone else's definition of success. Your dreams are uniquely yours, and that's their strength. The path won't always be smooth. There will be setbacks, moments of doubt, and people who might try to dim your light. Embrace those challenges as learning curves. Resilience isn't about never falling; it's about getting back up, stronger and wiser. My biggest advice to anyone is to never give up even when people doubt you. Surround yourself with people who believe in you, and who lift you higher. Their support will be invaluable on those tough days. And most importantly, be brave enough to take the first step, and then the next, even when you can't see the entire staircase. Your voice, your perspective, your dreams matter. Don't be afraid to claim them.

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, do you have any last words to our readers and where can they find you? Thank you so much for having me! It's been a pleasure sharing a little bit about myself. To readers, I'd say embrace your individuality, chase your passions fearlessly, and never stop exploring the incredible world around you whether that's a new city, a different culture, or simply a new perspective. Life is an adventure, so make the most of every moment. If you'd like to follow along on my journeys and see where I head next, you can find me on Instagram at Bass. Angel.Shannon or TravelBarbieDoll on TikTok . I love connecting with fellow travelers and sharing my experiences. Safe travels to you all, and maybe our paths will cross somewhere in this amazing world.



Patrick Stewart

20Q

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ELIZABETH WEINBERG**

With ***Picard***, the ***Star Trek*** universe has rediscovered one of its brightest stars. The actor and activist (and knight) talks Hollywood inclusivity, cannabis reform, pit bull rescue and whether he'll ever say "Engage!" off camera

BY **STACEY WILSON HUNT**

Q1: *The internet arrived in earnest between Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Picard. How have technology and social media changed your life and work?*

STEWART: I remember when iPhones first came out someone said, "Do you realize these are just like *Star Trek?" [laughs]* We used to have these things that we would talk on — or the other guys did. I just scratch the surface of what my phone can do; voice activation makes me uneasy. But we have access to CGI and special effects that are far more powerful than what we used to have. I hear about social media's hostile side, which I've encountered only once or twice. You can't comment about anything without attracting angry attention. That makes me uncomfortable.

Q2: *Isa Briones, an actress of Asian descent, and other nonwhite performers are central to Picard's narrative. Does a series like this, one not rooted in reality, still have a responsibility to reflect the real world?*

STEWART: I'm moved when I recollect [*Next Generation* co-star] Whoopi Goldberg telling me what it meant to her seeing the character Uhura on TV; what she said to me was, "One of us made it," which is partly ironic and a little cynical but nevertheless profound. Thankfully we are energetically acknowledging that there has always been a problem, and we're doing something about it. Five of our 10 episodes were directed by women, and I continually find myself in scenes in which female cast members outnumber the male.

Q3: *What is it about the mythology of Star Trek, the original series of which started in 1966 and lasted only three seasons, that has allowed it to endure?*

STEWART: In part it returns me to Whoopi's comment. We live in a complicated world in which the need for care and concern for other members of society is much more potent than it ever was before. My wife and I went to Italy earlier this year: Florence, Bologna and Ravenna. I'd never reflected much on these cities, so when I saw they were ancient towns — not just a church here, an old building there — and still vibrant parts of Italian society, I was astonished. The connection between past and present was so strong. *Star Trek* offers this too. And the connection to Whoopi's comment is that it will get better. Though right now it doesn't feel like that.

Q4: *Novelist Michael Chabon is a writer on Picard. How is it different working with someone more used to the solitary act of book writing?*

STEWART: He is so smart, open and interested. His enthusiasm for the actor's technique and processes is genuine. Because I'm an executive producer, I had access to the writers' room. It was a privilege to hear them bouncing ideas around in a way that actors and directors don't. One writer will take up an idea but change it into something else, and then another writer will change it again. I find it frustrating when they say, "No, that's not going to work," and move on to something else. [laughs]

Q5: *Picard is action-packed. What is it like doing stunts now that you're older?*

STEWART: Hell. I have a type of vertigo that hit me three years ago. I'm dizzy pretty much all the time, except when I'm sleeping or driving. Doctors say there's a disconnect between the signals my eyes and inner ear are sending to my brain. If I stand up quickly I might fall over, so I have to be careful on set. There's a scene in which Isa Briones and I run up a flight of stairs. They said, "We have a stunt double for you." I said, "Actually, let me give it a shot." I ran up the stairs and felt fine! I think when I'm acting, the dizziness goes away. Thank God.

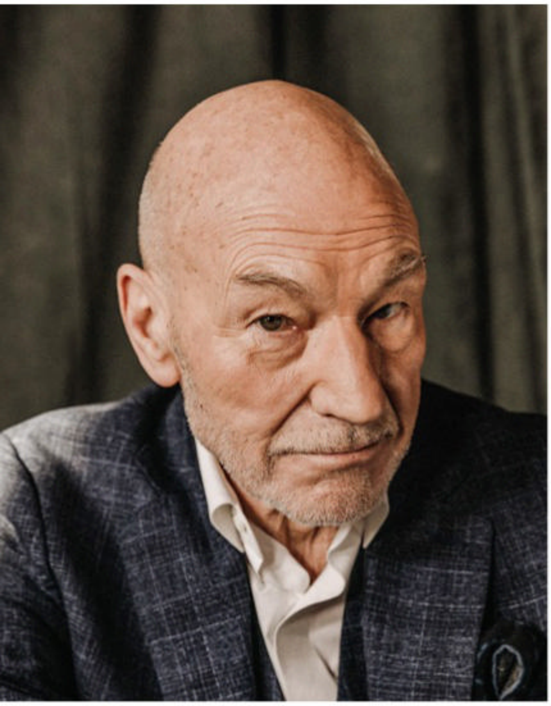
Q6: *A slew of your Next Generation pals, including Brent Spiner and Jonathan Frakes, appear on Picard. Are you all still close?*

STEWART: Yes. We see each other all the time, though not Whoopi as often as I'd like. They're beautiful people. Casts are thrown together, and the nature of acting means you're exposing yourself, which is a great bonding agent. I recently reached out to someone I'd worked with in 1967 at the Royal Shakespeare Company. I'd heard he was living in Beverly Hills, and with my team's help, I made contact. His name is Sir Ben Kingsley. [laughs] Over the years we would wave and say hi — but as I reminded Ben, he actually slept on a mattress on my bedroom floor for several nights.

Q7: *Was there ever a point when you considered quitting acting?*

STEWART: Never, because I would be quitting my life. When I was acting as a child, I wasn't "Patrick Stewart." I was living somebody else's life, one that was better than mine. I have always felt safe onstage. As the years go by, what I love about this job is that I get braver about showing myself, letting it be personal and not just a "performance."

Q8: *Sir Ian McKellen is one of your closest*



> I don't **know** what happened. **I swear** to you, I was 40 about six **months ago.**

friends and even officiated at your 2013 wedding. What have you learned from him?

STEWART: Gay men have played a part in my life as colleagues and friends, but none so significantly as Ian. I love him and I'm in love with him. So is my wife, and it's mutual. I listen to him, I watch what he does—and I don't mean just acting. How he lives his life is so admirable, selfless and compassionate. We also have a hell of a lot of fun.

Q9: *Around whom have you felt the most starstruck in your life?*

STEWART: We were at a Golden Globes party, and a woman with a strong accent came over and asked if I would take a photograph with her. You often have to say no; otherwise you'll be taking selfies all night. Then someone said, "Have you met Nadia before?" I said no. And he said, "This is [Olympic gymnast] Nadia Comaneci." I swear to you my knees almost gave way. I love athletics and sports, and there was Nadia, standing in front of me. It was thrilling.

Q10: *You've become an advocate for cannabis reform. What was your first experience with it, and when did this cause become so important to you?*

STEWART: Drugs played almost no part in my early years. I was around 40 years old before I had any experience with cannabis. What really did it was this [*rubs his hands*]. I have arthritis, so twice a day I use a cannabinoid-based cream, and wow, what a transformation! Another aspect: There was a limo driver my wife and I knew well in New York. We adored him. Then he got cancer and was dying. He stopped eating, watching TV, reading newspapers and talking on the phone. My wife got him some marijuana, and his family told us later that he lived longer than anticipated because he was leading a fuller life. He was eating and telling jokes. This profoundly affected me. Cannabis has medical properties that we've never fully explored. So yes, I'm a modest campaigner for the legalization of medical marijuana.

Q11: *You're also an outspoken supporter of women. Why have so few high-profile men shown similar support in the wake of the #MeToo movement?*

STEWART: Because I don't think they believe it. It's very hard for a lot of men, certainly those of a particular age or degree of success. The way male superiority has become part of our lives is very subtle and complicated. But it exists, and it's now changing — some think not quickly enough. I'm excited by what's happening around me and the impact it has on women's careers and self-respect.

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Q12: *When you were coming up in the theater and early on working in film and television, did you witness people being mistreated and think you should help, or was it something you accepted as part of the creative process?*

STEWART: I don't think I could claim to have thought like that. I do know that when I went to drama school, I already knew what a casting couch was—at 17! There is predatory behavior everywhere. I had firsthand experience with that because of my mother's domestic abuse. That's why I became involved with Refuge in the U.K. It's a wonderful organization that helps combat domestic violence.

Q13: *You've talked about wanting to become a United States citizen. How do you feel seeing both your native U.K. and the U.S. now in such tumult, culturally and politically?*

STEWART: It's been creeping up on me of late that I feel guilty I'm not in England more. My whole life I've been involved in left-wing politics. I'm still a member of the Labour Party but have profound reservations about it now. I'm scared. There's a movement toward nationalism in both countries, and one reason is economic and educational division. Boris Johnson and Donald Trump both appeal to people who have experienced deprivation. The gap between the rich and the poor, which is growing at a terrifying rate, and global warming are the things that alarm me most.

Q14: *Changing gears, you and your wife, Sunny, live in Park Slope, Brooklyn. What were some of your first impressions of your new home?*

STEWART: The people who live there are extraordinary. When I first stayed with Sunny at her place, we came out of her building on a summer Sunday morning and saw two guys sitting on a stoop, smoking. I saw one look up, and I didn't want an encounter. As I got abreast of them one of them said, [*in a New York accent*] "Hey, Mr. Stewart! Welcome to the neighborhood. Enjoy." That was it. No "Could I have a selfie?" I get emotional when I think about it, because I've never felt so welcomed, anywhere, in that way.

Q15: *There's a 38-year age difference between you and Sunny. How does this figure, if at all, into your day-to-day lives?*

STEWART: I'm learning so much from her. She remembers everything she reads, which has become formidable ever since she first visited me in London and encountered, in her words, "old shit." She's becoming an expert in late medieval–early Renaissance art and architecture. I walk into a church with her and know what's there because she's done the research. But do I think about our age difference? I'm afraid not very

much. I don't feel self-conscious about it. But it has happened in public when people say, "You and your daughter.…" And I say, "Thank you very much." [*laughs*]

Q16: *How did her family feel about your relationship?*

STEWART: I don't think they were too sure at first. But in my wedding speech I said, "I want to clear up a rumor circulating that I married Sunny in order to be near her parents. It's totally true." [*laughs*] We get on so well and laugh so much. They have a cabin in Alpine Meadows, California. I learned to ski at the age of 64. I told her father, "I can't do this. Leave me with a fire, a book and a pot of coffee." He said, "We've booked a trainer to do four hours a day with you." At the end of day four, I nervously took the lift to the top of the mountain and skied down alone. It was thrilling. I've watched hours and hours of winter sports and suddenly I hear that noise [makes whooshing sound], and it was me making it!

Q17: *What first drew you to the cause of animal rescue, and how has it changed you?*

STEWART: It was the trust and the openness of the first dog we fostered, a pit bull named Ginger. I was upset about something I was reading in the newspaper — a daily occurrence — and she came and stood in front of me. With her eyes, she asked, "Are you okay?" A week later, I was sick and throwing up in our bathroom in Los Angeles. And she brought Sunny to me. How do you explain that? Pit bulls are our obsession, but we can't keep pit bulls because they're banned in England. I'm part of a campaign working to get that changed, because it's ludicrous. It's nothing to do with dogs; it's about the owners.

Q18: *You turn 80 in July. How do you plan to mark this milestone?*

STEWART: Sunny has been planning for months now. It will be celebrated in Los Angeles and maybe London too. I don't know what happened, because, I swear to you, I was 40 about six months ago. I remember it vividly. I was filming Excalibur with John Boorman, the director. I didn't get in front of the camera after sitting in full armor all day. I begged him, "It's my 40th birthday. Let me at least be a background person!" He wouldn't. So I feel blessed to be reasonably healthy, to be working, to be so busy, to have an incredible wife with a family that has kind of become my family. I do occasionally get a little bit scared. It just doesn't make any sense to me how I got here.

Q19: *When you did a playboy 20Q back in 1992, you said your five desert-island discs were three classical albums, a cast recording of Sweeney Todd and your friend Brent Spiner's Ol' Yellow Eyes Is Back. Have your tastes since changed?*

STEWART: For the past 25 or 30 years, popular music wasn't in my life. Then I met Sunny, who plays it all the time. I've learned to love country music. I struggle with hip-hop. I'll never forget the first time I heard Sunny sing: I didn't know she was a singer, and then she said, "I have a gig." I didn't know what a gig was! She told me it was in the East Village and happening between 11 o'clock and midnight. *What?* I remember worrying, as the evening wore on, What if this is an open-mike night? Then she went onstage — after midnight. And that was it. Amazing. Wonderful.

Q20: *Also in your last 20Q you vowed never to appear as Jean-Luc Picard in public or utter Next Generation catchphrases. Are you still as strict about such things?*

STEWART: No, I've relaxed significantly about that. It would be weird — I mean really fucked-up — if I was still, "No, no, no, no, I won't say 'Engage!' " ■

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